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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

Nation

Methodist defrocking: A Methodist minister who was defrocked for declaring that she's a lesbian living with her partner is taking her case to a church appeals court.

The Rev. Irene Elizabeth Stroud, of Philadelphia, was ousted Dec. 2 for violating the United Methodist Church's law against "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" in the clergy.

She decided last week to appeal but delayed the announcement until after Christmas weekend. Notice of appeal must be filed this week.

She said one factor in her decision was something retired Bishop Joseph Yeakey, the judge who presided at her church trial, said to her after the verdict. Yeakey told Stroud, "The day will come when the church apologizes for this decision."

World

China and Taiwan: China lashed out at Japan on Monday for allowing former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to visit the country despite threats from Beijing that it could damage ties between the Asian rivals.

China sees Lee, who arrived in central Japan's Nagoya city Monday for a weeklong visit, as a symbol of Taiwan's independence movement.

Lee, 81, made no remarks on his arrival, but waved to a cheering crowd of more than 200 Taiwanese living here.

Pinochet indictment: Chile's Supreme Court has postponed until after New Year a decision on whether to uphold the indictment and house arrest of Gen. Augusto Pinochet on human rights charges, a judge reported Monday.

No reasons were given for the postponement, but two justices of the five-member panel are on vacation for the last week of the year.

Pinochet, 89, remained at his suburban Santiago, Chile, mansion Monday recovering from a stroke he suffered Dec. 18.

Munch theft: Police questioned a suspect for the first time in the bold robbery of two Edward Munch masterpieces, but declined to say Thursday how close they might be to finding the missing paintings.

"The Scream" and "Madonna" were stolen in a brazen daylight raid from an Oslo museum on Aug. 22 by three masked robbers. There has been no sign of the paint-



Middle East peace: Palestinian men wave as they and others are greeted by friends and relatives Monday after being released by Israeli authorities at the Tarkumiyeh checkpoint near the West Bank town of Hebron. Israel released 159 Palestinian prisoners Monday, most of them with only months or weeks left of their sentences, in what Israel called a "gesture to the new Palestinian leadership." Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said he would seek final Cabinet approval to his Gaza Strip withdrawal plan by February, months ahead of schedule, officials said. Lawmakers also quoted Sharon as saying Israel will use harsh force if Palestinian militants try to disrupt the pullout.

ings, although Norwegian media have reported that one painting, "Madonna," may have been seriously damaged.

Oslo Assistant Police Chief Iver Stensrud confirmed that a man was brought in for questioning Wednesday in connection with the theft. The man, whose name was withheld, was released but was still considered to be a suspect, Stensrud said.

Philippines' Estrada: Former Philippine President Joseph Estrada arrived in Hong Kong on Monday for knee surgery, and he promised that he would return to his country to face corruption charges.

Estrada looked relaxed in a denim jacket, jeans and sunglasses as he made his first visit overseas since being ousted amid massive anti-corruption protests in 2001. He has been under virtual house arrest at his holiday home east of Manila.

The 67-year-old former film star told reporters at Hong Kong's airport that he wouldn't try to abscond.

Imperial succession in Japan: Japan will set up a task force to consider allowing a

reigning empress, an official said Monday — the government's first review of a post-World War II law that limits imperial succession to men.

Japanese law bans women from ascending to the Chrysanthemum Throne. But no boy has been born to the Japanese royal family since the 1960s, and government officials have been fretting about how to solve the royals' most serious succession crisis in centuries.

Karzai's Cabinet meets: Afghan President Hamid Karzai held his first Cabinet meeting on Monday, urging his ministers to avoid political intrigue and work together for the future of this war-battered country.

Karzai swore in the new Cabinet last week, brushing aside several warlords in favor of professionals with university degrees.

He left Yunus Qanooni, his prime opponent in October elections, out of the government, saying he did so in order to allow Qanooni to start an opposition party.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

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Most Pacific troops accounted for after quake

Some were vacationing in Thailand; PACOM readies for possible humanitarian mission

BY JULIANA GITLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — In the aftermath of a deadly earthquake that rocked the Bay of Bengal and slammed much of southeast Asia with tsunamis, U.S. personnel in the Pacific began accounting for those on vacation in devastated areas and gearing up for possible humanitarian assistance operations.

A couple from Misawa Air Base, Japan, on vacation in Phuket, Thailand, survived the massive waves, said Toshi Muto, manager of Night Flight, a travel agency outside Yokota Air Base, where the couple booked the tickets. He spoke to his clients Monday morning in Thailand.

"They were at the beach," he said. "They are getting out of the country today."

Many Americans from military communities in the region had booked flights from on- and off-base tour operators to Thailand and India, according to employees at agencies in South Korea, mainland Japan, and Okinawa.

As of Monday, not all had been reached and accounted for.

At least 10 people from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, were thought to be in Thailand and India, both on leave and on duty, said M. Mike Paoli, 18th Wing spokesman. Those not yet contacted don't appear to be traveling in affected areas, he said.

Two tour groups from JTF at Camp Zama, Japan, were accounted for in Bangkok, according to employees who checked on them through tour operators in Thailand.

No casualties have been reported to the Army's Casualty Assistance Office, according to a U.S. Army Japan spokesman.

Three people from Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station, Japan, vacationing in Thailand, are safe, a base spokesman said.

Marines on Okinawa said responsibility for checking on individuals is left to individual units. The number of personnel in Thailand and their status was unavailable Monday, according to a Marine spokeswoman.

U.S. Forces Japan spokesman Gurney Sgt. Bob Hall said there is no central system for checking on U.S. personnel.

"USFJ doesn't have operational control over the other forces here. We don't track



People look at a submerged truck in the entrance of a supermarket Monday at Patong Beach in Phuket, Thailand. U.S. installations in the Pacific began accounting for vacationing servicemembers Monday who may have been staying in affected locations.

leave for all the other commands," he said.

The quake and aftereffects did not damage any U.S. Naval ships or assets, according to a 7th Fleet spokesman.

Also on Monday, U.S. forces in the Pacific began planning in the event servicemembers are asked to conduct humanitarian assistance.

If the Department of Defense pledges its support, the Pacific Command will be ready to respond, an official said.

"We are identifying resources available that can be utilized to provide the assistance required in the appropriate time and fashion," said Army Lt. Col. Bill Bigelow, PACOM spokesman.

Large-scale military disaster assistance is rare in the Pacific, but not unprecedented. Earlier this month, more than 600 Marines, sailors and

airmen from Japan and Okinawa helped the Philippine government move aid supplies to communities devastated by mudslides and flooding following two tropical storms and a typhoon.

The assistance came at the Philippine government's request.

Hall said no official request has come to USFJ for humanitarian assistance as of late Monday afternoon. If USFJ personnel are called on to help, word should arrive "by mid to end week," he said.

Staff writers Franklin Fisher, Dave Oranier, Jennifer Swan and Fred Zimmerman contributed to this report.

Japan system should give advance tsunami warning

BY CHIYOMI SUMIDA
Stars and Stripes

Japan's seismic experts said Monday the country has a warning system in place that could outrace even lethal tsunamis like the ones that slammed southeast Asia on Sunday.

If everything goes as planned.

Fumio Imamura, a tsunami engineering expert and professor at Tohoku University Graduate School, said an offshore tremor similar to Sunday's quake would cause a major disaster in Japan.

"Far worse casualties would be expected because most of the major cities in Japan are located along the shorelines," he said — as are U.S. Naval bases Yokosuka and Sasebo and Marine and Air Force facilities on Okinawa.

"But, on the other hand," Imamura said, "a disaster prevention system has been established in Japan."

The country carefully calibrates the location and strength of earthquakes, to be able to give advance warning of the lethal, giant waves they trigger, called tsunamis.

"As long as the system works as it should, the damage could be largely reduced," Imamura said. "Should one step go wrong, however, the casualties could be far worse" than the Indonesian disaster.

The epicenter of Sunday's 9.0 quake, among the strongest ever recorded, was west of Sumatra in the Indian Ocean. It was estimated to be from 310 miles to 621 miles long, said Assistant Professor Nobuyoshi Tsuji, University of Tokyo Earthquake Research Institute.

"If it happened in Japan, the seismic center would stretch from Tokyo all the way to Amami," Tsuji said. He likened the earthquake's impact to two major quakes striking Japan at the same time.

Japanese seismic experts estimate chances of a major earthquake striking along Japan's Nankai and Tonankai fault lines sometime within the next 50 years at 80 percent, according to the Central Disaster Pre-

vention Council of the Cabinet Office.

An earthquake along the Nankai fault could produce tsunami waves at a depth of about 2.5 miles, the average depth of water in the world's oceans.

He said tsunami waves travel about 434 mph, as fast as a jet plane, at a depth of about 2.5 miles, the average depth of water in the world's oceans.

"The Meteorological Agency monitors earthquake and tsunami activity at 300 points throughout the country," Tsuji said, adding that once a tremor is registered, the agency immediately calculates whether a tsunami is expected to follow.

Imamura said the projected death toll for a major quake along the Nankai fault line is 7,000 to 8,000 people.

He said any earthquake stronger than a 6.5 magnitude on the Richter scale, with a seismic center less than 24 miles below the surface, could produce tsunami waves. The power of tsunami "is like a huge truck, which is running at 30 to 40 kph (up to 25 mph) when it hits you," Imamura said.

"There is no way any house, not to mention a human being, can sustain the impact," he said.

The Japan Meteorological Agency said a tsunami warning can be broadcast in less than five minutes.

"We can issue the warning or caution within three to five minutes should any tsunami be forecast to hit Japan," said an official at the agency's Disaster Prevention Information Center.

The information would be given simultaneously to major media, prefectural and municipal governments, he said.

"In Sanriku district, where tsunamis are frequent, water gates at every port will be closed when a warning is issued," the official said. "It may not be possible to completely eliminate any casualties, but it is possible to largely reduce them."

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Navy base in Indian Ocean spared tsunami damage

BY LEO SHANE III
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Navy support facility located near the center of the Indian Ocean was spared any damage from Sunday's devastating ocean surges.

Officials said the Diego Garcia Navy Support Facility, which houses about 1,700 military personnel and 1,500 civilian contractors, suffered no damage related to Sunday's earthquake and ensuing tsunamis. Personnel at the facility's billeting office contacted by Stars and Stripes on Monday reported no problems with the weekend.

Diego Garcia, the southernmost island in the Chagos Archipelago, sits about 1,000 miles south of India and roughly 2,000 miles from the earthquake's epicenter.

More local stories on Page 11

But officials in Somalia, whose coast is nearly 3,000 miles from the earthquake's center, reported more than 100 deaths in coastal areas as a result of tsunamis.

Carolyn Bell, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Geological Survey, said even though an earthquake like Sunday's will radiate destructive waves in all directions, the damage caused by the water differs greatly depending on the undersea topography.

She speculated that the numerous coral reefs may have dissipated some of the waves' impact on the British-owned island,

resulting in only a slightly higher tide that residents might not necessarily notice.

She said residents of coastal areas in Australia reported no effects from the earthquake, even though researchers know the sea levels there rose several feet.

Diego Garcia is a horseshoe-shaped island about 39 miles long, surrounded by coral reefs on all sides. The highest point is only 22 feet above sea level.

Both Naval and Air Force personnel are stationed on the island. The facility was used to support and launch strikes against Iraq in the first Gulf War, and was used for strikes against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan, and again in 2003 for strikes in Iraq.

The Navy has eight ships active in the Indian and Pacific oceans; officials said none reported any damage from Sunday's disaster.

E-mail Leo Shane III at: shane@spjstripes.osd.mil



SG BRUNER/Stars and Stripes

Asia piles up dead as toll tops 22,000

BY CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA

The Associated Press

GALLE, Sri Lanka — The carnage from an earthquake-driven tsunami that devastated coastlines from Asia to Africa doubled to more than 22,000 dead Monday, and rescuers struggled to deliver aid to the hardest-hit areas, raising fears about the spread of disease as bodies rotted on tropical beaches.

Offers of aid poured in from around the globe, but millions of people remained homeless and thousands were still missing a day after the disaster. The number of dead was expected to keep rising as workers reached remote regions and the sea washed up more corpses.

U.N. undersecretary-general Jan Ege-land, who is in charge of emergency relief, said the disaster could be the costliest in history, "probably many billions of dollars."

More than 12,000 people died in Sri Lanka, nearly 5,000 in Indonesia, and 4,000 in India. The International Red Cross, which reported 7,700 deaths, said it was concerned that waterborne diseases like malaria and cholera could add to the toll.

Dazed tourists evacuated the popular island resorts of southern Thailand and the Thai-Andaman grandson of revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej was listed as one of more than 900 people dead. Scores more died in Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, the Maldives — and thousands of miles away in Africa.

Officials in Thailand and Indonesia officials conceded that immediate public warnings of monster waves could have saved lives.

The only known warning issued by Thai authorities reached resort operators when



A resident stands next to a damaged house in downtown Galle, Sri Lanka. The death toll from massive tsunami that struck Sri Lanka's coastline leapt to more than 12,000 on Monday.

it was too late.

In a scene repeated across the region, bodies were still coming in Monday evening to the hospital in Sri Lanka's southern town of Galle — one of the worst-affected areas of the hardest-hit nation.

A tractor carried about 15 corpses of mostly women and children, some wrapped in white plastic sheets. A large crowd had gathered at the hospital trying to learn if their missing family members were there.

"The toll is increasing," said Brig. Daya Ratnayake, a military spokesman. "We are finding more bodies."

The 20-foot-high waves smashed into seaside towns and resorts, sweeping away boats, homes, hotels, fishermen and holidaymakers.

At the Thai island resort of Phuket, the torrents pulled a 6-month-old Australian baby from her father's arms.

A large proportion of the victims were youngsters, and funerals were held for chil-

dren and teenagers who could not cope with the fury of the sea. Ted Chan, chief for the United Nations Children's Fund in Sri Lanka, estimated that nearly half the victims there were children.

Banda Aceh, a city of 400,000 people, is the nearest population center to the epicenter of the quake and was virtually unique in being destroyed by the temblor — the world's most powerful in 40 years — rather than the floodwaters. At least 3,000 people died.

The Indonesian and Sri Lankan governments declared national disasters, as did the Maldives, a low-lying string of coral atolls where three feet of water pushed into homes in Male, the capital, on Sunday and residents spent a night fearing the waves would return.

Indonesia and Sri Lanka had at least a million people each driven from their homes. Helicopters in India rushed medicine to stricken areas, while warships in Thailand steamed to island resorts to rescue survivors.

About 200 people were evacuated from devastated Phi Phi island, one of Thailand's most popular destinations for Westerners.

Witnesses in Thailand described seeing waters disappearing away from the beaches in the minutes before the waves struck.

Britain and Italy each confirmed that 11 of their citizens had died in Thailand, Norway confirmed 10 dead, Sweden had nine, with hundreds unaccounted for, the United States confirmed eight dead, France and Denmark confirmed three, and Australia, Belgium, South Africa, two. Finland confirmed one.

U.S. officials were seeking to contact hundreds of Americans who remain unaccounted for in the region, and European countries set up hot lines for family members and sent diplomats to aid stranded countrymen.

U.S. sends disaster teams off to nations

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States dispatched disaster teams Monday and prepared a \$15 million aid package to the Asian countries hit by a massive earthquake and tsunami. U.S. officials were seeking to contact hundreds of Americans who remain unaccounted for in the region.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said eight Americans died and that embassy officials were trying to locate other U.S. citizens who have not been heard from since Sunday's quake.

"We will do everything we can to immediately help," he said.

The U.S. Navy said it sent three P-3 surveillance aircraft from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, to Utopah, Thailand, to conduct survey operations, including a possible role in search-and-rescue efforts.

The Navy said it had no reports of damage to any of its ships or bases in the region.

The U.S. Pacific Fleet "is examining what else they may be able to do in this situation," Powell said.

President Bush expressed his condolences over the "terrible loss of life and suffering."

"As of now, we don't detect any large impact on the U.S. military," White House deputy press secretary Trent Duffy said Monday from the president's ranch.

U.S. officials immediately sent \$100,000 each to India, Indonesia, the Maldives and Sri Lanka, and planned to donate \$4 million later Monday to help Red Cross disaster efforts, Powell said.

The initial U.S. aid package being crafted was expected to reach \$15 million, officials said. Powell cautioned that was a "quick infusion" and that the administration was prepared to help with long-term rebuilding.

State Department officials said embassies in the affected countries are still open, and they are working to account for all Americans who may have been vacationing or living near those countries' coastlines.

Officials have created a toll-free hot line for U.S. citizens to get more information on relatives who may have been in the affected areas on Sunday. For Americans outside the United States, that number is (317) 472-2328.

Stripes reporter Leo Shane II contributed to this story from Washington.

Tsunami warnings inadequate

Officials admit they failed to alert public after quake

BY MICHAEL CASEY

The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Asian officials conceded Monday that they failed to issue broad public warnings immediately after a massive undersea earthquake in Indonesia, which could have saved countless lives from the subsequent giant waves that smashed into nine countries as far away as Africa.

India said it would consider establishing a warning system, and Australia and Japan said they would help build it. One Australian official said it would take at least a year to set one up.

Also, Thailand's Meteorological Department said the country lacked an international warning system and proper coordination to get messages of impending disasters sent across the country.

"If we had the international warning system, we could give real-time warning to people," said Seismological Bureau official Sumalee Prachuan.

Governments around the region insisted they did not know the true nature of the threat because there was no international system in place to track tidal waves in the Indian Ocean — where they are rare — and they cannot afford to buy sophisticated

equipment to build one.

And what warnings there were came too little, too late.

The magnitude 9.0 earthquake shifted huge geological plates beneath the sea northwest of Sumatra island, causing a massive and sudden displacement of

millions on tons of water.

Indonesia victims closest to the temblor's epicenter were swamped within minutes, but elsewhere the waves ranted onwards, gathering speed and ferocity until they made landfall. The moving waves topped 500 mph.



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Quake's littlest victims buried

Indian kids laid to rest in mass graves

BY S. SRINIVASAN

The Associated Press

CUDDALORE, India — The couple laid the body of their daughter in the pit and watched as a bulldozer poured sand over her and she disappeared from their view forever. They then stepped aside for others to bury their children, denied any chance for a service or private mourning.

In a scene repeated dozens of times across India's battered southeastern coast on Monday, weeping and red-eyed parents in Cuddalore held a mass burial for more than 150 children who died in the killer tidal wave.

Sunday's tidal wave disaster in South and Southeast Asia killed more than 22,000 people, and anecdotal evidence suggests that a large proportion of the victims were children. Associated Press reporters in various places reported seeing a high number of funerals for children and teenagers, who just could not cope with the fury of the sea.

In Malaysia, one-third of the 48 people confirmed dead were children and teenagers. Many of the deaths occurred during family picnics by the beach.

Rosita Wan, 30, said she watched in horror as waves carried away her 5-year-old son, Mohammad Adam Aziz, while he was swimming close to the shore on Penang Island.

"I could only watch helplessly while I heard my son screaming for help," a sobbing Wan told reporters. "Then he was underwater and I never saw him again."

A Danish group restoring a former Danish fort in Tranquebar in Tamil Nadu near Cuddalore said 300 children and fishermen from the nearby town of Nagapattinam are missing.

"Hundreds of thousands of children in coastal communities in six countries may be in serious jeopardy," said Carol Bellamy, the executive director of UNICEF.

About half of the nearly 400 people who perished in Cuddalore



Relatives of victims who were killed by tsunamis mourn Monday at a mass burial site in Cuddalore, India. A massive tsunami triggered by an Indonesian earthquake slammed into southern India on Sunday, killing more than 4,000 people and sweeping away boats, homes and vehicles.

AP

were children, leaving the town of 100,000 people in bereavement.

More than 4,000 people died in various parts of the country, most of them in Tamil Nadu.

According to Hindu tradition, children are not cremated like adults but buried. For the grim task, two pits, together the size of a basketball court half, were dug near the banks of Pennai river on the edge of this coconut palm fringed town — idyllic in parts and congested and grimy in others like most Indian towns.

Most of the children who were between 5 and 12 were buried as they were found — in their Sun-

day clothes without even the luxury of a shroud. The district administration was eager to get the burial — and the cremation of the adults — over quickly so that they could turn their attention to providing relief for the living.

"There will be a time for crying, but that will come later. Now the priority is to shelter those who survived," said fisherman Akilan, 28, who lost two nephews when the waves struck their seaside house. Akilan uses only one name.

One mile away at the town morgue, bodies of young and old lay unclaimed, awaiting identification by relatives. They were

called in one by one by doctors on a public address system. Siren-blowing vans brought in freshly discovered bodies.

Many people came out of the morgue shaking their heads in silence. Once in a while, a heart-rending cry would pierce the buzz of conversation.

"I never thought I would only see my son's body," Venkatesh cried, refusing to even sip water. He also uses only one name.

Policemen, overwhelmed by other grieving parents, gently asked him to leave.

As one of his relatives pulled him away, Venkatesh kept asking: "How can I go, leaving behind my son?"

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Option 2 offers childcare from 1800 Friday thru 1000 Saturday, including breakfast, for \$65 per child



Assassination attempt kills 15 in Baghdad

Sunni Muslim political party withdraws from Iraq election

By SLOBODAN LECIK
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — In a double blow to plans for a Jan. 30 parliamentary election, a suicide car bomb aimed at the head of Iraq's strongest Shiite party killed 15 people Monday, and the largest Sunni Muslim political grouping announced its withdrawal from the campaign for the Jan. 30 elections, citing the rapidly deteriorating security situation.

The suicide bomber tried to drive his car into the gate of the residence of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq — the country's most powerful Shiite political party. He detonated his explosives when guards blocked his way.

Fifteen people died and at least 50 were wounded in the explosion, which shook the Jadiriya district and sent a cloud of smoke high above the area, police said. Capt. Ahmed Ismail said, "Thirty-two cars on the street were destroyed or damaged. Al-Hakim was not hurt."

Al-Hakim also heads the candidate list of the 228-member United Iraqi Alliance coalition, which is widely expected to dominate the post-election constitutional assembly and play a key role in formulating Iraq's new national charter. The coalition is backed by Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

Just hours later, the leader of the moderate Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party announced that the group had reversed its earlier decision to take part in the elections.

"The security situation keeps going from bad to worse and has to be dealt with," said Mohsen Abdel-Hamid.

The two events underline the difficulty of holding credible national elections — the first free ballot since the overthrow of the monarchy 46 years ago — amid the instability caused by the escalating armed insurrection.

The prospect of attacks and intimidation had led senior Sunni political and religious leaders to call for a postponement of the vote until the insurgency is brought under control.

The Iraqi Islamic Party said its decision to pull out of the race does not mean that it would not take part in a future ballot.

"The party's desire is to take part in the future, should the requirements for its success be available," it said.

Party Secretary General Tarek al-Hashemi acknowledged that the withdrawal will leave minority Sunnis under-

represented in the assembly, but noted: "We are not in a house in which you should first put out the fire before working on decorating and arranging it."

Shiites comprise about 60 percent of Iraq's population, with Kurds and Sunni Arabs making up 20 percent each. Many in Iraq and abroad fear the legitimacy of the election would be compromised if the Sunni community refrains from voting.

Shiite leaders also have been sharply critical of the U.S.-led response to the insurgency, saying the Iraqis themselves would have been more effective in countering the mainly Sunni rebels.

Political and religious leaders of the Shiite community, who strongly back the holding of next month's vote, have been repeatedly targeted by the mainly Sunni Muslim insurgents since the ouster of Saddam Hussein.



A guard stands amidst rubble in front of the residence of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the country's most powerful Shiite political group. A suicide bomber detonated his car at the residence's gate, killing 15 people and injuring dozens, police said. Al-Hakim was unharmed.

Monday's suicide attack was the second on a leader of the party on the same day in the Jadiriya district of Baghdad. On Nov. 7, a car bomb exploded near the home of Iraq's finance minister, Adil Abdel-Mahdi. One of his guards died but the minister escaped unharmed.

Speaking after Monday's blast, al-Hakim denounced the interim government's security apparatus, claiming it had been infiltrated by Saddam loyalists.

"We hold the Iraqi government responsible for such criminal acts. This government has adopted the same wrong policies that were adopted by the occupation

forces in dealing with security," al-Hakim told Iraq's Al-Furat Television.

The residence, where Hakim has his home and office, was previously the house of Tariq Aziz, the former senior aide to Saddam who has been in prison since April 2003.

In August 2003, a suicide bomber killed Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, elder brother of Abdul Aziz and former leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Like his late brother, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, a Shiite cleric who opposed Saddam from exile in Iran before returning to Iraq.

Meanwhile, a U.S. soldier died of wounds Monday and another was injured in a roadside bomb explosion in Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad, the U.S. military said in a statement.

And in northern Iraq, gunmen shot dead an Iraqi working as translator for the U.S. military, police Brig. Gen. Sarhad Qader said. The shooting of Ali Ahmed took place in the town of Tur, 105 miles north of Baghdad.

The insurgents have repeatedly targeted translators and other Iraqis working for the U.S. troops in an effort to disrupt intelligence-gathering efforts by the multinational forces.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Sunday, Dec. 26, 2004, at least 1,323 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,034 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is seven higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Thursday.

The British military has reported 75 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia,

three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,108 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 925 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ No new deaths reported. The latest identifications reported by the Defense Department:

■ No new identifications reported.

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IN THE WORLD

Yushchenko claims victory in Ukraine vote

BY ALEKSANDAR VASOVIC
The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko celebrated his apparently decisive triumph in Ukraine's protracted presidential contest Monday, thanking protesters who spent weeks camped out in the capital's frigid streets for securing his electoral victory and the nation's freedom.

Three exit polls gave Yushchenko a 15 to 20 percentage point lead over Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich.

But the official vote count gave Yushchenko a narrower lead: With ballots from 98.49 percent of precincts counted by 1 p.m.,

Yushchenko was leading with 52.29 percent compared to Yanukovich's 43.92 percent.

"Now, today, the Ukrainian people have won. I congratulate you," the West-

ern-leaning Yushchenko told a jubilant crowd in Kiev's Independence Square, the center of massive protests following the Nov. 21 runoff that was annulled after allegations of fraud.



Yushchenko

"We have been independent for 14 years but we were not free," he said. "Now we can say this is a thing of the past. Now we are facing an independent and free Ukraine."

But Yanukovich had not conceded defeat and Nestor Shufrych, a lawmaker and Yanukovich ally, told reporters the prime minister's campaign would appeal.

Results were trickling in from two regions in pro-Yanukovich territory in eastern Ukraine. Central Election Commission chairman Yaroslav Davydov urged election workers to do their jobs. "Put political issues aside. The state is waiting for results," he said.

Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, whose own rise to power on a wave of peaceful protests in November 2003 inspired Ukraine's opposition, congratulated Yushchenko in a Ukrainian-language message delivered over Ukrainian television. Saakashvili, who attended law school in then-Soviet Ukraine, apparently is first foreign leader to publicly recognize Yushchenko's victory.

Poland's former President Lech Walesa told the Polish news agency PAP that Yushchenko's victory meant that "Ukraine on its road to freedom and democracy made a small move towards Europe."

Yushchenko was not taking

chances. He called his supporters back out onto Independence Square on Monday afternoon to defend the election victory, if necessary, and asked for their help in what he called the main task facing the nation: forming a trustworthy government.

Sure of victory, Yushchenko backers appeared to be taking a rest after weeks camped out in Kiev. About 5,000 gathered in Independence Square on Sunday night to hear his victory speech, setting off fireworks in celebration.

Earlier, Yushchenko said at his campaign headquarters that Ukraine was beginning "a new political life."

Alleged bin Laden tape endorses al-Zarqawi as deputy

The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — In an audiotape broadcast Monday by Al-Jazeera satellite television, a man purported to be Osama bin Laden endorsed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as his deputy in Iraq and called for a boycott of next month's elections there.

The voice on the tape described al-Zarqawi as the "emir" of al-Qaida in Iraq and

called upon Muslims there "to listen to him."

Speaking of a statement last month in which al-Zarqawi declared allegiance to bin Laden and changed his group's name to al-Qaida in Iraq, the voice on the tape called it "a great step on the path of unifying all the mujahideen in establishing the state of righteousness and ending the state of injustice."

The voice sounded like bin Laden but there was no way to independently confirm who the speaker was.

Al-Jazeera broadcast excerpts of the tape while showing a still photo of the bearded bin Laden, wearing a white robe and head covering.

Al-Zarqawi's group is responsible for numerous car bombings and beheadings of foreign hostages in Iraq.

This was the second tape by bin Laden to surface this month. An audiotape posted on an Islamic Web site Dec. 16 had a man identified as Osama bin Laden praising militants who attacked a U.S. consulate in Saudi Arabia earlier this month and calling on militants to stop the flow of oil to the West.

Bin Laden is believed to be hiding in the mountains along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

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Commissary locator highlights Web site change

By Rick Brink
richard.brink@deca.mil

FORT LEE, Va. — The "commissary locator," a new driving-distance calculator and mapping feature on <http://www.commissaries.com>, highlights several changes to the Defense Commissary Agency Web site designed to help patrons maximize their shopping experience. The Web site sports a new red, white and blue motif with drop-down navigation menus to give the site a consistent look and operation throughout and to help visitors navigate more speedily. It also gives visitors an option to view Flash animations highlighting features that make commissary shopping so unique and popular among U.S. military service members.

"The changes couldn't come at a better time. November marked the first anniversary of unlimited commissary shopping for Guard and Reserve families, many of whom live some distance from a commissary. Our new commissary locator feature will make it easy for them to determine where to shop," said Patrick B. Nixon, DeCA's acting director and chief executive officer.

Visitors use the commissary locator by providing their ZIP code and a driving distance of their choice into data fields on a Web page. The

system responds by providing a list of all commissaries within the driving distance. When visitors select a commissary from the list, they're taken to that commissary's Web page that features a link for detailed driving directions to the commissary from a location provided by the visitor. The Dec. 1 launch of the new-look Web site comes four years after it was last changed. The site's content is essentially the same, although it's been organized and presented a little differently in some cases to better present content that's been added in the last four years.

The popular commissary store Web pages, which each of the 272 commissaries maintain themselves to provide the most current local shopping information possible, are still featured under the "locations" navigation button.

Designed with commissary shoppers in mind, the site also serves DeCA employees and its business partners. A new "about us" navigation button serves as the gateway to job announcements, information for employees, information for business partners and as a way to access the online customer comment form. Thanks to the drop-down navigation menus, these popular features are just a click away from the home page.

Scholarships for Military Children program enters fifth anniversary year

By Bonnie Powell
bonnie.powell@deca.mil

FORT LEE, Va. — The fifth year of Scholarships for Military Children is now underway. Administered by Fisher House Foundation and funded by the manufacturers and industry supporting commissaries, the program has awarded over \$3 million through nearly 2,000 scholarships to the sons and daughters of active duty service members, Guard and Reserve members, and military retirees.

"The Scholarships for Military Children program has become a major community event for commissaries since its inception five years ago," said Patrick B. Nixon, chief executive officer for the Defense Commissary Agency. "The program awarded 500 scholarships in 2004 and ceremonies were held in commissaries worldwide in honor of these outstanding students. The industry members who support this program should be proud — and we hope the fifth anniversary year will be the best yet!"

Applications for the 2005 program are available at commissaries or online at <http://www.militaryscholar.org>. A link to the program will be on <http://www.commissaries.com>, the

advertising supplement to the Stars and Stripes

DeCA Web site. Eligibility and other information are also available at the program Web site. Applications, which must include an essay on how the heightened awareness of terrorism has impacted the student's life, are due at commissaries Feb. 16, 2005. At least one \$1,500 scholarship will be awarded at every commissary location with qualified applicants.

The scholarship program is open to unmarried children under the age of 21 (23 if enrolled in school) of active duty personnel, Reserve, Guard and retired military. Eligibility will be determined using the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) database. Applicants should ensure that they, as well as their sponsor, are currently enrolled in the DEERS database and have a current ID card.

The applicant must be planning to attend, or already attending, an accredited college or university full-time in the fall term of 2005, or enrolled in a program of studies designed to transfer directly into a four-year program.

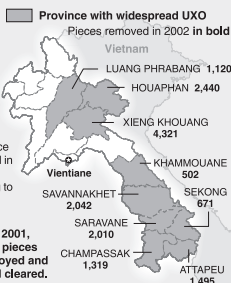
The scholarship program can also accept public donations at <http://www.militaryscholar.org>.

UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE IN LAOS

A deadly remainder of war

The presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) is widespread in nine of Laos' 17 provinces, according to a government monitoring group.

Between 1995 and 2001, more than 292,000 pieces of UXO were destroyed and 4,600 acres of land cleared.



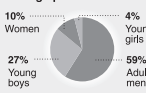
Continuing toll

From 1973 to 1996, unexploded ordnance caused 10,649 deaths and injuries, according to the U.S. Department of State.

Average number of UXO incidents, annually



Demographics of casualties



SOURCES: Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Program; U.S. Department of State

U.S. vows to increase aid to Laos for UXO removal

By Frederic J. Frommer

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three decades after the end of the Vietnam War, the United States is increasing aid to help remove unexploded ordnance that continues to kill people in the former war zone — especially in Laos, where 2 million tons of bombs were dropped.

During the war, the United States bombed Laos relentlessly for a decade in an effort to cut off North Vietnamese supply lines.

Though the war ended 30 years ago, the carnage from those bombings continues.

Nearly a third of the bombs failed to explode, lying in wait as "de facto anti-personnel mines," according to a Human Rights Watch report. The bombs have killed roughly 6,000 Laotians since the end of fighting.

"Every time I go to Laos, I meet fresh bomb victims who have lost an eye or a leg or two," said Jim Hartwick, a retired Wisconsin school principal who helps educate people about the experience of Lao refugees in his state.

U.S. pilots dropped 2 million tons of bombs on Laos from 1964-1973, double the amount dropped on Germany in World War II.

The United States has agreed to nearly double the amount of aid it provides to help remove those bombs, known as unexploded ordnance, or UXO. Congress approved \$2.5 million for bomb removal in Laos next year, up from \$1.4 million, as part of a move to normalize trade relations with the impoverished Southeast Asian country.

But the improvement in trade relations and even the increased funding for bomb removal were opposed by some critics who said Laos continues to persecute its Hmong minority that fought alongside the CIA during the Vietnam War.

"Why should the U.S. taxpayer pay to remove land mines and unexploded ordnance from the Vietnam War, when the Lao government and military are involved in military operations against the Hmong people?" asked Philip Smith, the Washington director of Lao Veterans of America.

But Rep. Betty McCollum, a Minnesota Demo-

crat, said the United States "has a moral obligation to partner with the people of Laos to help eliminate the ordnance and put the land back into productive use for this impoverished nation."

Many of the Hmong people who fled Laos settled in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

While the Lao government is in charge of bomb removal, it relies on help from other countries and outside groups to help pay for it. The Lao bomb removal agency, UXO Lao, hit a crisis point a couple of years ago.

"Money wasn't coming in in sufficient numbers, and UXO Lao had to let go of half of its employees," said Douglas Hartwick, the U.S. ambassador in Laos from 2001 until last July. "So there was a big push on the part of donors, and the Lao government to put together a long-term coherent strategy to clean up the unexploded bombs."

The agency's annual budget is around \$4 million, according to its Web site. Officials with UXO Lao did not respond to e-mails seeking comment.

Hartwick said the explosives removal process, using metal detectors, is painstakingly slow. "You're getting constant hits with a metal detector," said Hartwick. "You've got shrapnel like you wouldn't believe, just bullets, mortars and grenades."

The Mine Advisory Group, a nongovernmental organization in Great Britain that helps destroy land mines and unexploded ordnance worldwide, is one of several private groups that receive U.S. money for work in Laos.

Sean Sutton, the group's spokesman, said, "It's welcome news that the United States is doing more to help."

During a visit to Laos in October, he said, seven people were killed when a man hit a bomb while chopping wood. Just a few days later, he said, two boys were killed when playing with tennis-ball-sized cluster bombs.

He said many of the injuries and fatalities occur when poor Laotians are attracted to the explosives in search of scrap metal.

"Don't give the students guns ... give them education," the demonstrators chanted. "We want peace. End the violence."

They carried banners calling for immediate peace talks.

The government has repeatedly asked

rally, urging the rebels and government to resolve their conflict peacefully.

The rally, organized by students and non-government groups, halted traffic in central Katmandu.

"Don't give the students guns ... give them education," the demonstrators chanted. "We want peace. End the violence." They carried banners calling for immediate peace talks.

The government has repeatedly asked

the Maoist guerrillas to abandon violence and join government-rebel peace talks. But the rebels have refused, saying they'll only negotiate in the presence of international mediators.

The guerrillas also want an independent election for a special assembly, which would draft a new constitution.

The government has refused to involve a third party such as the United Nations in the peace talks, saying the conflict is not an

international dispute and should be resolved internally.

The rebels have been fighting since February 1996 to replace Nepal's monarchy with a communist state. The insurgency has claimed nearly 11,000 lives.

Fighting between government forces and the rebels, who say they are inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, has escalated since the guerrillas withdrew from a seven-month cease-fire last year.

Jail time for 11 terror plotters

But men found not guilty of eyeing U.S. sites in Jordan

By Jamal Halaby

The Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — Jordan's military court on Monday acquitted 13 Muslim militants — including three Saudi fugitives — of conspiring to commit terror attacks against U.S. targets in Jordan, but sentenced 11 of them to prison terms ranging from six to 15 years for possessing explosives.

Two defendants — Jordanian Saud al-Khalayleh and Isam al-Barqawi — were acquitted for lack of evidence in charges that they possessed explosives and plotted attacks.

The prosecution charged the 13-member cell — including three Saudi fugitives and 10 Jorda-

nians in police custody — of possessing and intending to use explosives and conspiring to carry out terror attacks. The prosecution charged the 13 men with targeting the U.S. Embassy in Amman and Jordanian military bases near the Iraqi border where the militants believed American troops were stationed. The verdicts can be appealed.

No attacks had been carried out when police uncovered the plot in December 2002.

Only one of the defendants, Zuhair Shidefat, has confessed to plotting terrorist attacks.

None of the accused are suspected of belonging to al-Qaida, Jordanian security officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.



Honduran President Ricardo Maduro consoles Aida Munguia at the morgue in San Pedro Sula on Friday, a day after Munguia's sister-in-law and 22 others were killed in an attack on a bus in the town.

9 held in Honduras attack

The Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — Nine members of the dangerous youth gang Mara Salvatrucha are being charged with homicide for allegedly waging the armed attack on a public bus that left 28 people dead two days before Christmas, Honduran President Ricardo Maduro said.

The investigation has focused on suspected Salvatrucha member Alex Ramirez, 23, who was captured after the attack driving a car whose interior was

stained with blood; he had two assault rifles, two handguns and ammunition.

Ramirez was identified by survivors of the attack as the man who boarded the bus Thursday evening in San Pedro Sula to open fire on passengers at close range, Security Minister Oscar Alvarez said Sunday. Ramirez had been arrested twice before on charges of belonging to a gang and bearing illegal weapons.

"I promise my people that those responsible for the massacre will rot in jail," Maduro said.

Nepal students demand government, rebels stop violent 8-year feud

By Yuvraj Acharya

The Associated Press

KATMANDU, Nepal — More than 100,000 people marched through Nepal's capital on Monday, demanding that the government and Maoist rebels halt fighting that has claimed nearly 11,000 lives in this Himalayan kingdom.

Students from Katmandu's schools and colleges left their classrooms to join the

rally, urging the rebels and government to resolve their conflict peacefully.

The rally, organized by students and non-government groups, halted traffic in central Katmandu.

"Don't give the students guns ... give them education," the demonstrators chanted. "We want peace. End the violence." They carried banners calling for immediate peace talks.

The government has repeatedly asked

USS Kitty Hawk personnel train for trouble



PHOTOS BY BO FLANNIGAN/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Petty Officer 2nd Class Steven Fox, above left, from Morehead City, N.C., positions an aircraft barricade during flight deck drills while air department personnel, above right, prepare for an aircraft-barricade drill aboard USS Kitty Hawk. Aircraft barricades are used to stop incoming aircraft when landing gear fails to operate or in other emergency situations.

Strike Group 5 plans routine visit to Guam

Stars and Stripes

APRA HARBOR, Guam — Three ships from San Diego-based Expeditionary Strike Group 5 are expected to make a routine port visit to Guam this week as part of their tour in the Western Pacific, according to a Navy news release.

The amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard and the amphibious transport USS Duhalde were to arrive Tuesday. The dock landing ship USS Rushmore is expected to arrive Thursday, the release stated.

Bonhomme Richard, known as the "Revolutionary Gator," carries elements of a Marine landing force, which makes up approximately half of the 3,000 service members aboard.

All three ships are to leave Guam Jan. 2. The Strike Group, which embarked on a six-month tour of the Western Pacific Dec. 6, includes more than 6,000 servicemen, seven ships, a submarine, more than 30 aircraft, high-speed landing craft and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.



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***** Traveling children under 12 years old are not included.

***** Please verify all info of booking.

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IN THE STATES



A motorist dodges traffic after parking his truck at right and moving to assist a car that went into a ditch during a snowstorm Sunday on Virginia 10 between Chuckatuck and Smithfield, Va.

Snow, sleet hamper East Coast travel

By MARK PRATT

The Associated Press

BOSTON — A storm spread sleet, freezing rain and more than a foot of snow along the Eastern seaboard, knocking out power Monday to thousands in New England, stranding hundreds of motorists along icy highways in the Carolinas and causing airport delays.

At least two traffic deaths were blamed on the weather in North Carolina.

Fourteen inches of snow had fallen Monday in Virginia and 18 inches fell in eastern Massachusetts as the storm skimmed the coast on a northeasterly track. Up to 20 inches of snow possible in northeastern Massachusetts, according to the National Weather Service said.

Just over 8 inches fell on the eastern tip of New York's Long Island.

The snow limited Boston's Logan International Airport to a single runway until a second was opened late in the morning. That caused "substantial" flight delays, said Logan spokesman Phil Orlandella. Rhode Island got up to 10 inches and T.F. Green Airport in Warwick had flight delays Monday after shutting down late Sunday night so crews could clear runways.

Among the travelers affected were the New England Patriots, who arrived in Boston by bus early Monday after a seven-hour ride from New Jersey, where they defeated the New York Jets 23-7.

"We were all loaded on the plane in Newark and ready to leave and there were some long discussions" about deteriorating airport conditions in Boston and Providence, said WJZ sportsman Ky, el Santos, the team's radio play-by-play announcer. The players got off their plane and boarded four buses, he said.

The snow was accompanied by stiff wind, and as many as 22,000 customers lost electrical service. Most of them were back on line by late morning, said NSTar spokesman John Milton. Scattered outages were reported elsewhere in eastern New England.

The storm's combination of wind, freezing rain and snow hit parts of the Carolinas on Sunday, snapping tree limbs and power lines.

About 2,100 customers were still without electricity Monday in North Carolina, down from a peak of 14,000. More than 16,000 homes and businesses were blacked out Sunday in South Carolina, but that number was down to less than 5,000 Monday morning.

Traffic resumed moving early Monday on Interstate 95 in eastern North Carolina after Sunday's ice and more than six inches of snow slowed cars and trucks to a crawl and made some motorists give up altogether.

Hundreds of travelers spent the night in hotel lobbies and shelters.

Comair works to restore full service to customers

By JOHN NOLAN

The Associated Press

HEBRON, Ky. — Regional airline Comair will need several days to resume a full schedule of flights that were grounded over the busy holiday weekend due to a computer failure, a company official said.

A day after all 1,100 of Comair's flights were canceled, customers frustrated from days of delays and cancellations got some relief Sunday when the airline resumed 172 flights, about 15 percent of its normal schedule.

"We anticipate Comair will be able to operate on a full schedule by Wednesday," said Nick Miller, a spokesman for the Delta subsidiary based at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport. "That is our goal."

About 100 people stood in line Sunday at the ticket counter shared by Comair and Delta, waiting to be helped by two dozen agents. Nearby, the airlines were huge piles of lost luggage.

Comair wasn't the only airline that experienced problems during the holiday travel rush. US Airways started chipping away

Sunday at a mountain of backed-up luggage, part of what its chief executive called an "operational meltdown." Hundreds of US Airways flights were canceled from Friday to Sunday, the result of severe weather. Thursday and large numbers of baggage handlers, ramp workers and flight attendants calling in sick.

US Airways was operating at near-normal levels by Sunday, when it had canceled 43 of about 1,200 flights systemwide. That was down from 143 scratched flights on Saturday and 176 on Friday.

U.S. Department of Transportation spokesman Robert Johnson said Sunday that federal Comair's computer shutdown forced the airline to cancel all of its Saturday flights. Miller did not know how many customers were affected, but said the airline serves 30,000 travelers in 118 cities on a normal day.

Jackson Lashier, 26, and wife Julie, 27, of Williams, Va., called Comair about 50 times Saturday before finally reaching a worker who told them their flight to Des Moines, Iowa, on Sunday was

canceled.

Comair booked the couple on a Delta flight to Minneapolis, where Lashier's parents would pick them up.



Cents and Sensibility
Money tip of the day

Breaks for helping parents

By NANCY DUNNAN

You can possibly cut your federal income taxes if you've been helping out a parent financially. But the IRS rules are a bit tricky and you may want to consult a tax expert. Here are the basics for claiming the "dependent exemption," which is worth \$3,100 for 2004.

■ You must have supplied more than half the support for a parent during the year.

■ If you've kicked in less than half, as long as family members together contribute

"We feel very fortunate that we are able to get out today," Lashier said Sunday. "A lot of people here today are under much worse circumstances."

more than half, you can get the exemption provided other contributors agree in writing not to claim it.

■ Your parent must earn less than \$3,100 in taxable gross income.

You also can claim a credit of up to \$3,000 — if you hire someone to take care of your parent or parents while you go to work.

For more information read IRS Publication #502, www.irs.gov. Financial adviser, economist and security analyst Nancy Dunnan is the author of "How to Invest \$50 to \$5,000." She writes a weekly column for theonlineinvestor.com

Kwanzaa education

HACKENSACK, N.J. — For Marlene Ware, a teacher at Teaneck High School, Kwanzaa is an opportunity to demystify Africa.

"A lot of African-Americans to this day really don't acknowledge the role that Africa has in the world," Ware said.

As organizer of the high school's annual Kwanzaa celebration, which was held earlier this month, Ware uses the holiday to demonstrate the importance of Africa to people of all races.

Families and educators look to Kwanzaa as a way to educate young people, particularly young African-Americans, about Africa as well as the struggles blacks have faced in the United States.

"It invites family time and family unity and it gives them another sense of who they are," said Keli Drew Lockhart-Ba of Trenton, a psychologist who celebrates the holiday with her family.

Casino buys kids' gifts

HOUSTON — An online casino will pay a man \$5,300 for his naughty children's Christmas gifts.

The same casino — GoldenPalace.com — made headlines buying a cheese sandwich said to bear the Virgin Mary's image and a plate that supposedly came from the Titanic.

The Pasadena man said last week that he decided to auction the three Nintendo DS game systems because his sons, ages nine, eleven, and 15, had misbehaved.

The man says his family will use the money to buy a new heating system for his Pasadena church. He spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

From The Associated Press

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Japanese yen (Dec. 27)	102.00
South Korean won (Dec. 27)	1,020.00
Euro cents (Dec. 27)	\$1.3612
Dollar buys (Dec. 27)	\$1.724
British pound (Dec. 27)	\$1.57
Commercial rates	
Saudi Arabia (Dirham)	0.377
British pound (Dec. 27)	\$1.3818/413
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.724
Hungary (Forint)	183.25
Indonesia (Rupiah)	61,925
Israel (Sheqel)	\$1,268
Japan (Yen)	104.08
South Korea (Won)	1,065.50
Switzerland (Franc)	1.531
Thailand (Baht)	39.63
Turkey (Lira)	1,388,689.00
Philippines (Peso)	6,1914
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.75
Singapore (Dollar)	1.366
South Korea (Won)	1,065.50
Switzerland (Franc)	1.531
Thailand (Baht)	39.63
Turkey (Lira)	1,388,689.00

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military buying facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Commercial exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany) check with your local currency bank facility. Commercial rates are inter-bank rates for dollars against the U.S. dollar. All figures are foreign exchange rates for the dollar, which is represented in dollars and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

PRECIOUS METALS

New York Merc ore	
Gold	\$440.30
Silver	\$6.803

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	5.25
Federal funds market rate	2.25
3-month bill	2.20
30-year bond	5.25

Sources: The Associated Press, Bank of America

OPINION

Christian influence on U.S. can't be erased

By STAR PARKER

Scripps Howard

The holiday season brings an element of predictability each year into our otherwise-tumultuous lives. We know what to expect: parties, food, shopping, resolutions and debates on cable shows about the constitutionality of public displays of nativity scenes.

So what about it? Is Christmas itself unconstitutional? Is it a religious holiday? Is it a once-religious holiday that we retain because it rivals tax cuts as a stimulant to economic activity? Do we keep Christmas as a national holiday for practical reasons? Surveys indicate that roughly 80 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians. The country couldn't function if, on December 25 each year, 8 out of 10 Americans took the day off.

I think the discussions we Americans have with ourselves every year about Christmas and religion and the Constitution remind elements of self-delusion. Christmas is clearly a Christian event. Although the various means and symbols through which the holiday is celebrated have changed over centuries and traditions, they are all associated with Christianity.

The Christmas trees that stand on the nation's ellipse and in the White House do not stand in Tel Aviv or Tokyo or Cairo. We delude ourselves to think that it is possible to remove all religious content from Christmas or that Americans want to. So, instead, we fend off relentless American Civil Liberties Union assaults, make concessions here and there, and tacitly go on every day doing

what we supposedly in principle can't do — recognizing the inseparability of the values that Christians brought to this land from our national being and identity.

There is the notion that a free society is a society of law and not of men. The founders of our country did as good a job as humanly possible to construct a constitutional foundation that gives our nation these characteristics. Legal barriers stand at every corner that prevent intrusion of one person on the life, liberty and property of others.

But, as we can see from experience and from what is going on today, it is impossible to have a society that is totally insulated from human judgment and values. The most beautifully constructed legal system will still need human judges to interpret the laws, and human elected officials to govern and administer.

The words may say that "All men are created equal," but we have had contentious times in our nation's history defining who is a man and what is equal. The words may say "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," but we have better debates today about defining life.

Certainly the drafters of our constitution would never have dreamt that one day the definition of marriage would be a point of contention. So, in truth, we have a society of laws and men.

Perhaps we can say that, at minimum, Christmas is one day we Americans insist on setting aside to remind ourselves that who we are as a nation goes beyond the particular laws we have, but also reflects who we choose to be as human beings. ...

Our laws assure that no one can prevent



others from "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." But our values dictate what we do with these freedoms we protect. Our laws protect us from the worst, but our values point the way to our best.

It is good that, in our free society, our values are constantly challenged. It forces us to readress them and get back in touch with them. As I stood in a crowded line of Christmas shoppers in a department store the other day, I couldn't help but see irony as impatient customers berated the poor elderly

gentleman fumbling with the computerized cash register he was trying to operate. If this is what Christmas has become, perhaps we should let the ACLU declare victory and pack away our ornaments.

Americans will not relinquish Christmas because of an inherent knowledge and conviction that the greatest gift we have is what has been bequeathed to us. To understand that is to be humble and to be free.

Star Parker is president of Coalition on Urban Renewal and Education and author of the recently published book "Uncle Sam's Plantation."

Put saving lives ahead of our squeamishness on race

Race is one of those topics that few people in polite conversation these days discuss realistically. They fear anything they say will be used against them.

Peter A. Brown

Even when the discussion involves singling out a racial minority in a positive way, there is a growing tendency to mouth politically correct platitudes that discourage examining anything along racial lines. Perhaps that is why a potentially huge breakthrough that seems likely to save the lives of thousands of blacks with serious heart disease has gotten a relatively tepid public response.

There has been something of a collective angst about the development of this new drug aimed specifically at blacks. That's because the new drug may be seen in many circles as validating the scientifically questionable notion that there are widespread genetic differences between the races.

However, just as political concerns about offending abortion-rights opponents should not get in the way of stem-cell research, so, too, the societal touchiness about race should not interfere with this promising line of inquiry.

The drug was specifically designed to work on black patients, who generally have a death rate twice that of whites from severe heart disease. In other words, the treatments that have been commonly used are not as effective for blacks as for whites.

Scientists have attributed the higher death rate from heart disease to a variety of factors in the black community: lower-quality medical care, high-cholesterol diets and higher poverty rates. Another reason may

be that, in the past, blacks may not have been involved as subjects in large enough numbers in the clinical trials that led to the current treatments.

But because the PC Police are especially active in academic circles, researchers have been loath to examine the question of whether something in the genetic makeup of blacks might lead to the higher death rates. Now, NitroMed, a suburban Boston company, has come up with a drug, BDI1, that in clinical trials reduced deaths among blacks from advanced heart failure by 43 percent. That is, as they say in the science biz, a meaningful result.

It is quite possible that, because the clinical data were confined to studies of black patients, the Food and Drug Administration will approve its use only for blacks. Naturally, some medical ethicists have begun to wring their hands about the unhealthy implications of such data for American society. ...

The worry is that any research that suggests a genetic basis for characteristics specific to a certain race could be inflammatory.

That is obviously why, for instance, there has been so little scientific investigation into explaining how blacks, who comprise 12 percent of the national population, so dominate professional athletics.

Or why Asian-Americans, who make up roughly 4 percent of our citizenry, are so overrepresented at prestigious colleges. At Harvard they are about 17 percent of the student body, and at the University of California, Berkeley, roughly 40 percent.

The understandable concern is that such analysis on positive achievements might also rear its ugly head relating to less favorable statistics. However, despite those concerns, it would be misguided and dangerous if we allowed such worries to become a legitimate reason to discourage similar research in the medical field. ... Surely the ability to

save many lives — some estimates on this heart-disease drug run as high as 15,000 annually — is worth ruffling some feathers.

Just as with stem-cell research, if scientists can produce a meaningful benefit from such inquiry, it would be stupid to tie their hands. After all, we know that some ethnic groups are more likely to suffer certain diseases than the general population.

Jewish women who trace their ancestors to Eastern Europe are thought to have a higher risk of some breast cancers. Members of the Pima Indian tribe reportedly are more likely to get diabetes.

Doctors theorize that certain genetic combinations, which in some cases may fall along racial or ethnic lines, predispose some people to specific illnesses. If that knowledge allows physicians to find effective treatments for diseases that work primarily for only certain racial or ethnic groups, so be it.

Peter A. Brown is an editorial page columnist for The Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel.

Mallard Fillmore

By BRUCE TINSLEY



Generous gift

CO DENVER — Residents of Samaritan House didn't know what to expect when the bearded, middle-aged man parked his sport utility vehicle in front of the downtown homeless shelter Christmas Eve.

The man walked into the building, pulled out a thick roll of \$100 bills and began passing them out to each of the approximately 300 residents.

As a crowd gathered, the man said he had once been homeless and knew what it was like to be in need. He did not identify himself and said only that he lived in Denver and had also distributed money at a Las Vegas shelter.

Lutefisk support GIs

MN GLENWOOD — Each year, Mike Field ships anywhere from 200,000 to 300,000 pounds of lutefisk from his small shop here to customers all over the United States.

But his latest order of the stinky fish crosses a new horizon.

One lutefisk-loving soldier has ordered 25 pounds of the pungent lye-soaked fish to be shipped to Afghanistan as a "treat" for the servicemen and -women stationed there.

The order came from Mike Lindemo, a serviceman with the U.S. Army stationed in Afghanistan — and yes, Lindemo's the one who called it a "treat," Field said.

Field said that Lindemo told him he wouldn't mind if it costs \$50 a plate, he wants the lutefisk, which is a holiday tradition for many with Scandinavian heritage.

Child welfare warned

FL ORLANDO — Days before a 4-year-old girl died from a blow to the head in a filthy motel room shared with five siblings and her parents, the state child welfare agency was told about her living conditions but declined to investigate, according to documents released Wednesday.

Kai Gadison was found dead Monday after her mother called 911 to report the child wasn't breathing. She died of blunt force trauma to the head, an autopsy report said. The mother, 27-year-old Kenya Hill, initially was held on charges of child abuse and violation of probation, but was charged Wednesday night with murder.

The other five children were being cared for in a foster home.

Busting out the baton

RI LINCOLN — A Woonsocket man was restrained at gunpoint by a state Department of Environmental Management officer following a traffic dispute.

Stephen Chauvin, 24, was charged with felony assault with a dangerous weapon on Tuesday. The DEM officer spotted him walking from his parked car toward an environmentalist with a 2-foot-long retractable baton on Route 116 shortly after 9 a.m.

Chauvin and the other driver had both pulled over to the side of the road.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

The DEM officer witnessed the confrontation and ordered Chauvin to put the baton down. When he failed to comply, the officer drew his weapon. Chauvin then stopped and was later charged by police.

Locks of rehabilitation

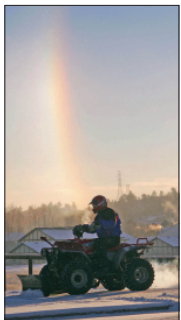
HI HONOLULU — Employees at Salon Bobbi N' Guy received an unexpected Christmas gift this season — locks of hair from an inmate in jail on drug charges.

Salon vice president Alex Choi said the hair was a welcome gift because it will be sent to Locks of Love, a nationwide nonprofit group that collects hair to make wigs for financially disadvantaged children suffering from hair loss because of illness.

The black hair — enough for about five wigs — arrived on Christmas Eve from a male inmate at the Waiaua Correctional Facility who said he wanted to make a sacrifice as proof of his sincere wish to turn his life around, Choi said.

Ominous message

ND ALLENHURST — The decades-old message scrawled on the bottom of a dresser drawer was ominous — alluding to a murder and detailing the location of the victim's body.



Sundogs of winter

A sundog shines in the subzero temperatures as Don Baxter clears snow on Alkali Creek Road in Billings, Mont. Sundogs form because ice crystals refract each color of light differently.

But after fruitless digging by police in a back yard in the Monmouth County borough Wednesday, the message may prove more useful to a local author than to authorities.

Shovels, a backhoe and ground-penetrating radar failed to unearth any human remains from the yard of Richard Fennicola, a doctor and author who says he might use the detail in his next book.

"My immediate decision was that we had to resolve this because I didn't want people saying a month or a year or 10 years from now, 'What happened to the body in your backyard?'" he said.

Fast food hero

LA BATON ROUGE — A McDonald's worker ran to the rescue of an allegedly drunk driver whose car was rolling toward a canal, pulling the man from behind the wheel about 10 feet before the vehicle fell into the water and submerged.

"He saved that man's life," fellow McDonald's employee Priscilla Morgan said of co-worker Tomio Harris.

The pair were working early Thursday morning when driver Brian Broussard, 20, pulled up to the drive-thru service window.

East Baton Rouge sheriff's deputies say when Broussard's foot slipped off the brake, the car began to roll toward a canal across the street from the McDonald's. Harris took off after it, pulling Broussard from the still-moving car just before it plunged into the canal.

Advance pews available

OH AKRON — Joe and Kathy Tricaso weren't taking any chances on not getting a seat for Mass on Christmas Eve.

The couple, who live in the Akron suburb of Green, spent \$85 in a church auction last summer to reserve a pew.

Their investment paid off. The parking lot at Queen of Heaven Catholic Church was filling fast when they arrived an hour before Friday's 4 p.m. service.

"The rule is you're not allowed to save seats, and kind, loving Christians can get pretty mean-spirited if you tell them they can't sit down when they see an empty seat on a pew," Joe Tricaso said.

Here's mud in your way

VA RICHMOND — An American Airlines plane preparing for takeoff went off the runway and became stuck in mud Thursday at Richmond International Airport, shutting the airport's two main runways to all incoming flights, an airport spokesman said.

American Airlines Flight 1239 bound for Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport was mired at the grassy juncture of the airport's two main runways around 8:20 a.m., airport spokesman Troy Bell said.

None of the 129 passengers or five crew members on the MD-80 was injured, Bell said. All passengers had been evacuated by 10:30 a.m.



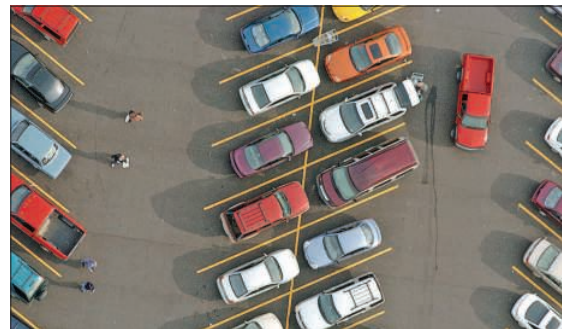
Floppy the snowman

A snowman yard ornament seems to relax on a bench as snow falls along Quittman Street in Iuka, Miss.



Outta the way!

Ronnie Martinez of Calallen, Texas, takes a ride down a hill at West Guth Park in Corpus Christi.



Parking nightmare People walk through the Wal-Mart Supercenter parking lot in Buckhorn, Pa., toward their vehicles as a driver looks for one of the few empty spaces left in the lot while a shopper places bags into an SUV.



Hands-on job Handprints are visible in the heavy frost covering a door at the Hippodrome in Eveleth, Minn.



Icicles abound Frigid cold and wind from Lake Michigan turn this shore marker at 31st Street Beach into a giant icicle in Chicago.



Consuming blaze A home occupied by Debbie Hunt and Frank Holzkamp burns in McCracken County, Ky. The residents and their dog escaped and were not injured.

Scalding death

MI ROCHESTER HILLS — A pregnant woman was charged with killing her boyfriend's toddler daughter by scalding her in what prosecutors say was 147-degree water, then ignoring her suffering for several hours.

Letitia Ann Johnson, 27, of Orion Township was charged Wednesday with second-degree murder in the death of 22-month-old Jasmine Phillips.

Johnson gave the girl a bath Saturday night in scalding water, then put her to bed, according to her statements to police. Johnson was aware Jasmine was in pain, according to prosecutors.

Louie D. Phillips, 26, found his daughter Sunday morning and called 911, police said. She was pronounced dead at a hospital. The medical examiner ruled the death a homicide caused by dehydration from extensive third-degree burns.

Traffic deaths analysis

HI HILO — Big Island motorists died in traffic crashes at more than three times the rate of Oahu drivers from 2000 to 2003, while the county's frequency of vehicle fatalities, when adjusted for population, was nearly twice that of Maui and Kauai counties during that time, a state analysis found.

The statistics were contained in a study recently released by the state Department of Health.

The per-capita fatality rate for vehicle occupants was similar when figures were adjusted to account for the counties' different sizes. Deaths from motorcycle, bicycle and pedestrian accidents were excluded from the study.

State loses residents

MA BOSTON — Massachusetts was the only state in the nation to lose residents in 2004, U.S. Census data shows.

The state lost an estimated 3,852 people, or about 1.1 percent, in the last year, despite continuing growth in immigration to the Bay State, the Boston Sunday Globe reported.

Paul E. Harrington, an economist at Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, attributed the fall to a stagnant job market. He said the decline could be an ominous sign for the state.

"Population loss is a pretty fundamental number," he said.

Offsetting the trend is a boost in foreign immigrants, Harrington said, who are counted by the Census but often don't show up in job or unemployment data. That suggests that these workers are being paid under the table, which could create a "long-term economic growth problem," he said.

Line drawn at \$104M

FL MIAMI — A Florida appeals court threw out as "shockingly excessive" a jury's \$104 million verdict over a teenager who was left severely brain-damaged after becoming trapped underwater by the suction of a pool drain.

The 3rd District Court of Appeal on Wednesday ordered a new trial in the lawsuit brought by the family of Lorenzo Peterson against

pump maker Sta-Rite Industries.

Peterson died earlier this year, after the trial.

He nearly drowned while swimming with friends at age 15 when a Sta-Rite pump sucked his arm into an uncovered drain at an apartment complex in North Miami in 2000.

Six adults were unable to free the teen. He was eventually released when a police officer arrived and shut off the power.

West Nile virus down

NY ROCHESTER — Cases of West Nile virus plummeted in New York state in 2004, health officials said.

The mosquito-borne illness prompted some panic when it first hit America in 1999, but drew little attention this year in New York.

In all, 10 people tested positive statewide for the virus in 2004, compared with 71 last year. Around 200 birds had confirmed West Nile this year, down from 1,367 in 2003.

Experts aren't sure yet if cases will remain scarce or whether the drop is simply part of a down cycle in the virus' lifespan.

Land preservation

VA CHARLOTTESVILLE — A preservation agreement will keep about 1,060 acres surrounding Monticello — land that was once part of Thomas Jefferson's plantation — much as it was in his day.

The nonprofit Thomas Jefferson Foundation announced a plan to place the land surrounding the historic house in permanent conservation easement, which cedes all development and division rights to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, a state agency committed to preserving areas of scenic and historical value.

"The mission of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation is preservation and education," said its president, Dan Jordan.

The areas placed under easement include three separate tracts: a 418-acre parcel known as the Home Farm, the 560-acre Tufton property and 80 acres bordering the Rivanna River. All the land was once part of the original Monticello plantation site.

Chicago-centric auction

IL CHICAGO — Dyeing the Chicago River green on St. Patrick's Day: \$7,600. Placing the winning bid for a hallowed city tradition: Priceless.

The city's eBay auction of Chicago-specific experiences and treasures ended Wednesday night after raising more than \$242,000 for the city's arts and cultural programs — including the winning \$7,600 bid for the opportunity to dye the Chicago River green March 17.

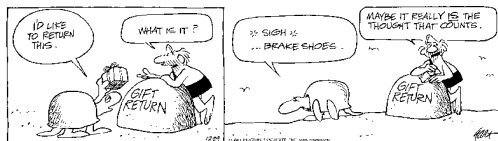
The top bid came in at \$21,000 for a wedding package that includes catering for 100 to the city's ornate Chicago Cultural Center overlooking Michigan Avenue. The second biggest draw — dinner for 10 with television broadcaster Bill Kurtis, accompanied by a documentary about the winning bidder's life — went for \$18,600.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

Foxtrot



B.C.



Baby Bites



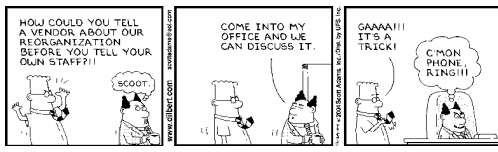
Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



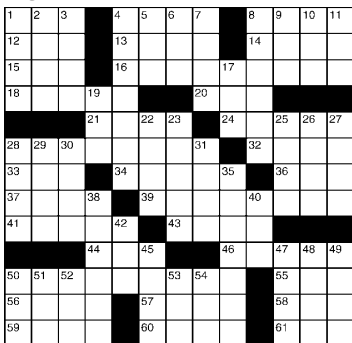
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



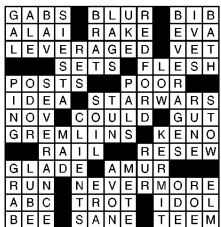
Across

- 1 Early bird?
- 4 Picnic hamper
- 8 Advertising award
- 12 Privy
- 13 Belge
- 14 Patronize the library
- 15 — Jose
- 16 Bubbly
- 18 Pond cover
- 20 Ms. Sills, to pals
- 21 Parent sharers
- 24 Rodeo cry
- 28 Lumbago
- 32 VCR descendant
- 33 Cretan mountain
- 34 London newspaper
- 36 Shriner's chapeau
- 37 Ethereal
- 39 "Common Sense" man
- 41 Knapsack part
- 43 Dark, filmwise
- 44 Symbol of intrigue
- 46 Winger or Messing
- 50 "Miracle on 34th Street" actor
- 55 Massage
- 56 Lotion additive
- 57 "Cheers" order
- 58 Suffering
- 59 Dandelion, e.g.
- 60 Aardvark's "hunch"
- 61 "Holy cow!"

Down

- 1 "Born Free" lioness
- 2 Target
- 3 Amateur-night pros
- 4 Proof of purchase
- 5 Interlaken interjection
- 6 Glass of NPR ennuui
- 7 Exist
- 8 Energy
- 9 Ali —
- 10 Journey segment
- 11 Sonnet, sometimes
- 12 Church seat
- 13 Sherd
- 14 Fisherman's need
- 15 Who says?
- 16 Music lover's hookup
- 26 It takes the cake
- 27 Leak slowly
- 28 Prejudice
- 29 Mine entrance
- 30 "It Must Be Him" singer
- 31 "Finding —"
- 32 Cast-iron skillet
- 33 Reacted with
- 34 Ennuui
- 35 Exist
- 36 Energy
- 37 Ali —
- 38 Tars' bars
- 39 Hold the scepter
- 40 Competent
- 41 Mandible
- 42 Bullring bravo
- 43 Weeding implement
- 44 Longing
- 45 Profit

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-29

CRYPTOQUIP

Z R Z H I Z G O G L Q O I D E L M L D
T V L U O H Q K M O I J, M I U O
Z G T E O G G R T D D K D Z R W O J

Q K G V Z H Z W G ?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I REALIZED THAT SOMEONE TEACHING A LAMAZE CLASS MIGHT BE CALLED A LABOR LEADER.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals C

Sister-in-law's 'joke' goes too far

Dear Abby: My husband comes from a family of practical jokers. When I first married "Vince," I tolerated it.

However, after my sister-in-law, "Vicki," sent a stripper to my office as a birthday surprise, I asked her politely and firmly to stop. All my request did was provoke her to continue hounding me and to escalate the jokes.

Her last "joke" was the last straw. Vince and I had planned a dream vacation to Europe. Vicki called our travel agent and attempted to cancel it over the phone. She had our confirmation number and my credit card information.

It's lucky that I'm close friends with the travel agent, who knew it wasn't me.

Besides never costing us thousands of dollars in unrefundable travel costs, we realized that Vicki had snooped through our personal belongings. How else could she have obtained my credit-

card numbers and the confirmation number for the trip?

Vicki is no longer welcome in our home. She has never apologized and seems to enjoy showing up at our house, forcing us to deny her entry. How can we get her to stop harassing us, and how can we get the family to recognize the seriousness of this?

Dear Abby



— Ticked Off in Houston

Dear Ticked Off: Your sister-in-law appears to have gone off the deep end. There is a difference between a practical joke and malicious mischief, a fact that seems lost on the woman. Until she grows up and says sorry, you are within your rights to distance yourselves from her.

Dear Abby: I am a woman in my 30s with an outgoing personality. A few weeks ago I struck up a conversation with an elderly man in a store. We shared a common

interest in computers, so I gave him my e-mail address. In his first two e-mails, he suggested we have lunch and asked if I was married. In his third e-mail, he volunteered that he only "co-existed" with his wife and said they were probably headed for divorce.

At that point, I e-mailed him that I didn't think our correspondence was a good idea because it could cause problems for him, even if he was looking only for friendship.

He replied with an angry e-mail saying I had offended him by suggesting that he would cheat on his wife.

I'm not sure if I overstepped my bounds and owe him an apology.

— Wants to do the Right Thing in Carolina
Dear Wants: The right thing to do is stop the e-mails. Delete him from your computer and your life. You do not owe him an apology or any further contact.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.ueexpress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four original words.

ZAWLT

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VENET

DORPAN

PORTSY

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THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argentin

How about a pizza tonight, Clara?

I only go to the first places

THIR 90HS

SHE SPURNED THE PRINTER'S ADVANCES BECAUSE HE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

HER " " "

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: CANAL FOLIO NOTIFY PERMIT

Answer: The actress got the part because she could — FEINT A FAINT

Find better home for father-in-law

Dear Annie: My wife's 85-year-old father lives with us, and he is slowly breaking up our marriage. He is gross and nasty, thinks he owns the place and treats us like little kids. We have no privacy.

Did moved in after his wife died, and he's been here for five years.

He is quite capable of taking care of himself, but is too lazy and was spoiled rotten by my mother-in-law. Talking to him does no good. He's just ornery and mean. My wife hates the situation but says she is responsible for him until he dies, even though she is well aware that our marriage should be her first priority.

Unless something can be done about Dad, we're headed for divorce court.

— Giving Up in Michigan
Dear Michigan: Being responsible for Dad doesn't mean he has to live with you. It only means that you both should see that Dad gets the best care possible. Start

Annie's Mailbox



looking into retirement homes and assisted-living centers. Dad sounds like a good candidate for such places, and he could make lots of new friends as well. Point out to your wife and your father-in-law that he obviously is unhappy with the current situation and it is wrecking your marriage. He needs to find more appropriate accommodations. Please don't wait.

Dear Annie: This letter is in response to "Disappointed in Seattle," who went on a job interview and sent a nice thank-you note, but has heard nothing since. I am a career counselor and can tell you this man has plenty of company. Here are my tips: Taking the online job application and giving it a makeover probably cost "Disappointed" the job. It says there's something wrong with the company. Job searches can take anywhere from six months to a year or

more. He may need to adjust his expectations of the job market.

Interviews are a two-way street. Never lose sight of the million-dollar question: "Is this job really for me?"

Career changers like "Disappointed" often need to rethink their approach, and a good career counselor may be of help. The National Career Development Association (www.nacada.org) has a public referral directory.

Finally, every rejection is one more step toward finding the right job. With the right approach, right attitude and LOTS of patience, I am sure "Disappointed's" fortunes will turn.

Theresa O'Neill, MA, NCC Career Counselor, Newark, N.J.

Dear Theresa O'Neill: Your optimism will boost the spirits of the unemployed.

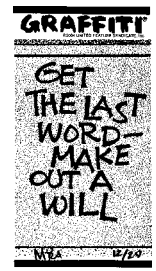
Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Creators Syndicate

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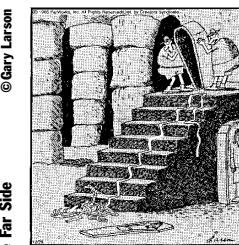
"I'm talkin' to you on the phone, Grandma."



Dennis the Menace



The Far Side



WE WERE GONNA PLAY AN NEW GAME, BUT DAD FELT ASLEEP READING THE RULES.

Whoopsies! ... In this tomb does have a curse on it, Webster. I dare say we'll be the first to find out.

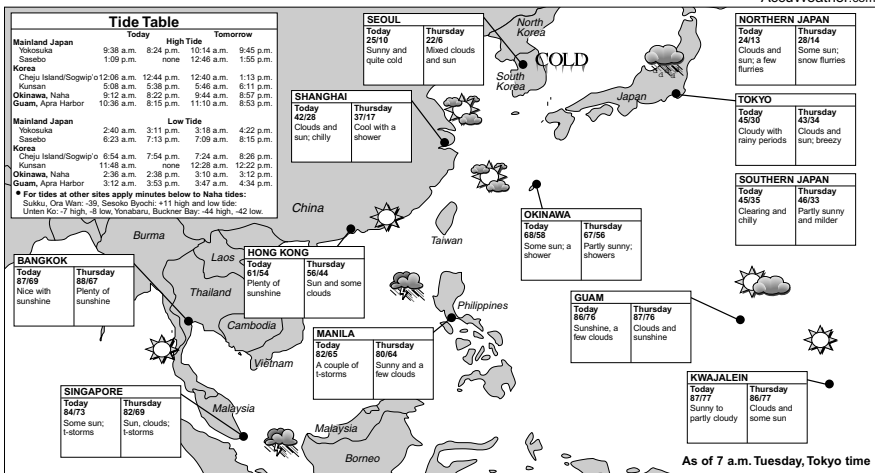
Non Sequitur



The Pacific Forecast

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AccuWeather.com



Extended Forecasts

TOKYO
 Friday: Rain, high 49, low 34.
 Saturday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 42, low 31.

KADENA
 Friday: Showers, high 59, low 49.
 Saturday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 58, low 50.

SEOUL
 Friday: Mostly sunny, high 18, low 3.
 Saturday: Mostly sunny, high 23, low 14.

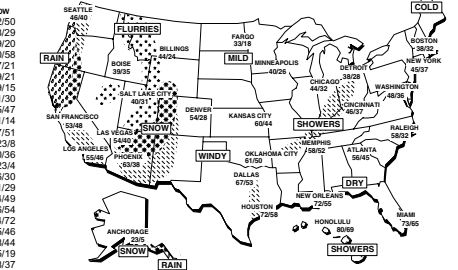
MANILA
 Friday: Showers, high 85, low 67.
 Saturday: Showers, high 83, low 66.

HAGATNA
 Friday: Partly sunny, high 86, low 77.
 Saturday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 86, low 78.

Monday's USA Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Albuquerque	51/31	Los Angeles	62/50
Amarillo	57/33	Little Rock	43/29
Anchorage	25/16	Louisville	29/20
Ashville	44/21	Miami	70/58
Baltimore	32/14	Milwaukee	27/21
Birmingham	51/29	Nashville	39/21
Bismarck	26/13	New York	29/15
Boise	44/29	Omaha	41/30
Boston	25/12	Orlando	65/47
Brownsville	73/54	Philadelphia	31/14
Buffalo	19/14	Phoenix	67/51
Burlington	14/3	Pittsburgh	23/8
Charleston, SC	48/26	Portland, OR	50/36
Charlotte	45/20	Portland, ME	23/4
Chicago	23/11	Salt Lake City	46/30
Columbus, OH	26/12	St. Louis	41/29
Duluth	21/16	San Antonio	64/49
El Paso	59/38	San Diego	66/54
Hartford	24/10	San Juan	84/72
Helena	28/12	Tampa	65/46
Indianapolis	25/17	Tulsa	58/44
Jacksonville	56/36	Washington	35/19
Kansas City	52/38	Wichita	58/37

Wednesday, December 29



U.S. Extended Forecast

Two storm systems will affect the West Coast on Wednesday. One system will bring showers to Washington and Oregon with snow to the Cascades. A second storm system will bring rain to Southern California along with Nevada, Arizona and Utah. Snow will fall across the higher elevations and winds will gust over 30 mph in many places with gusts over 50 mph in the mountains. Breezy and mild from the Plains to Texas. High pressure will bring nice weather to the Southeast. A clipper will bring some flurries from Michigan to Maine. The storm system in the Southwest will lift northeast on Thursday and bring rain and a few thunderstorms to the Midwest with snow in the colder air across the Dakotas and Minnesota. It will remain warm across the East Coast. Unsettled weather will continue in the West.

Wednesday's Pacific Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Bangkok	87/69	Jeju	46/35
Beijing	20/3	Kadena AB	68/58
Camp Casey	26/10	Kunsan AB	31/18
Diego Garcia	70/50	Kwajalein	87/77
Hagatna	84/74	Manila	82/65
Hanoi	86/76	Misawa AB	29/16
Hong Kong	66/54	Osan	27/10
Honolulu	61/54	Perth	85/59
	80/69	Pusan	40/26

Wednesday's World Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Acapulco	69/74	Budapest	35/25	Kabul	40/19
Athens	53/42	Buenos Aires	81/64	Kiev	33/24
Auckland	69/56	Cairo	78/59	Kuwait	65/45
Baghdad	67/49	Cancun	77/66	London	46/45
Barbados	87/69	Cape Town	84/59	Madrid	45/40
Barcelona	47/34	Geneva	29/25	Mexico City	72/37
Berlin	34/29	Islamabad	54/41	Montreal	33/17
Bermuda	59/52	Jerusalem	68/54	Moscow	91/75
Brussels	39/31	Johannesburg	32/22	Warsaw	32/22



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- * Field Proven (that says it all)



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Bryant needs West's guidance once again

BY SAM SMITH

Chicago Tribune

LOS ANGELES — For Kobe Bryant, the road back to the public eye began with the loss to former teammate Shaquille O'Neal and the Heat.

Bryant was good, though he took a few too many one-on-one opportunities.

He was humble afterward, respectful of O'Neal and the Heat and hopeful his team soon could play with them.

He focused on seeking a bright future. And Phil Jackson, of all people, believes that's possible.

"Kobe is his own counsel lots of times," Jackson said before the Christmas Day game. "He needs to seek people outside to soften his approach. But at one time he was one of the fair-haired boys of the NBA, and people do want him to succeed. He can win that back. He has to reach out and engender those feelings. He's got to solicit the friendship of the fan again to bring back those wishes he's had over the years. He can get that, but it's going to be a frustrating [process] for him."

And he needs Jerry West.

Jackson didn't say that, but Bryant does. And he could get West. As Jackson suggested, one of Bryant's major problems is his stubbornness. It's also one of the traits that makes him a great player. He refuses to believe that he cannot succeed. He also refuses often to listen to others, which be- deviled Jackson and led to their estrangement.

But one person in basketball Bryant always has admired and respected is West, now the Grizzlies general manager. West is probably the league's best executive. It was West who put together the deals to trade for Bryant and



Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant (8) gestures as Miami Heat's Shaquille O'Neal (32) looks on Saturday. It might be possible for Bryant to win back fans under the guidance of former GM Jerry West.

sign O'Neal. It was West whom Bryant went to when he and O'Neal developed issues. Once West left, there was no one for Bryant to trust in the organization. West should have been a Laker for life, but he and Jackson clashed, especially with Jackson earning millions of dollars a year more than West.

West went to Memphis for the big payday he never got. Now it's time to come home. Given the recent changes in Memphis, West clearly has lost influence amid talk around the NBA that he could leave. And one figures there are more changes to come for the Grizzlies, 12th in the Western Conference.

Perhaps even an ownership change? As one league executive put it: "It's hard to maintain enthusiasm for a losing team when you're an absentee owner."

Michael Hensley lives outside Chicago. This is his fifth year with the Grizzlies, and it could be a good time to get out. Tax rules limit depreciation after that. And

now he has a new arena.

Perhaps it's a coincidence, but Hornets co-owner Ray Wooldridge sold his share to George Shinn, Wooldridge is from Memphis and tried to hire current Grizzlies coach Mike Fratello when Shinn hired Tim Floyd. And no disrespect to Mitch Kupchak, but West's is a magic name in basketball.

No one wants to play with Kobe? They'd play for Jerry West. Who has been better cobbling together winners after losing stars like Magic Johnson, James Worthy and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar? Who'd be better counsel for Bryant? The Lakers need West. And West needs to get away from the Grizzlies.

Pair of aces or royal flush? Could the next Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen be in Chicago Tuesday?

"How much different were Scottie and M.J.?" Richard Jefferson asked while talking about his pairing with Vince Carter. What makes his Nets debut Monday

and comes to play the Bulls on Tuesday? "If you look at what they did, they both were slashers, they both were shooters, how are they any different? Jordan had his fadeaways. Pippen used to post up and bring the ball up at the small forward spot."

That came in response to talk of whether forwards Jefferson and Carter can play together. They aren't quite Jordan and Pippen, though they are spectacular players. They've got a real point guard and star in Jason Kidd. It puts Carter in the ideal spot for him — a secondary star.

Carter never wanted or sought the responsibility of being a star. He always seemed like a guy who enjoyed dunking in a closet. Carter struggled after fellow star Tracy McGrady left Toronto. It was McGrady who sought to leave, and it didn't work for either of them.

"Tracy and I have talked about that: 'What if he stayed?' Carter said. 'He says, 'Sometimes, I wish I stayed.' I say, 'I wish you did too.' But I try not to get caught in that because it drives you crazy.'"

Of his new start with the Nets, Carter says, "I sit in my room and try and put myself in different scenarios 'in it or not it works out [and] I can't do it. I can't imagine how other teams are going to [stop] it. Who you going to worry about more: Jason, R.J. or me?'"

"We got two guys who can play above the rim," Kidd noted with a word of caution. "We can definitely go out and fill the lanes. But first we have to get the ball."

Van Gundy won't change: The Rockets (12-14) continue to be one of the league's major disappointments. Jeff Van Gundy's team doesn't seem to be any closer to harmony after being beaten by the expansion Bobcats twice in a five-day span. "You know what I've changed enough," Van Gundy said.

"I am who I am. We're not going to sit there and set in a group bug today. We're not going to sing Christmas carols."

Said McGrady: "Right now, I don't think anybody respects me." When asked about Van Gundy's change that the team lacks intensity, Maurice Taylor woke up long enough to say: "That's his opinion."

Paxson reunion possible: Will it become a management family affair in Chicago? There's talk in Cleveland that prospective new owner Dan Gilbert, a Detroit native, may want to model the team after the Pistons with someone like Bill Laimbeer in charge. General manager Jim Paxson has three years left on his contract (he could be out if the Cavs [15-11] decline after the risky additions of Jeff McInnis and Drew Gooden. The Paxson brothers are close. John could add his brother if Jim is forced out.

Prescription for Owens: Grant Hill had some words of caution for Eagles receiver Terrell Owens. Watch your step. Owens is having neck surgery in Baltimore with Dr. Mark Myerson, the same doctor who operated on Hill's ankle in 2000 and 2001. "Myerson is putting it out there that he was the one who got Grant Hill back, and we all know that wasn't the case," Hill said. "I wouldn't my time with him."

Hill himself had a more involved procedure performed in 2003 by Dr. James Nunley at the Duke Medical Center in North Carolina. Nunley broke Hill's heel and realigned it with his lower leg. Hill, who has had screws and plates inserted in his right foot three different times, scoffed at Owens being able to return this season. The Magic will visit Chicago Saturday with Hill, the comeback story of the year. He is averaging 19.4 points and has missed just one game.

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IT Site Manager K.A.B. Three years experience in relational database management, to include database design, management, and query construction. Advanced knowledge of Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint. Intermediate knowledge of Microsoft Access. At least 5 years supervisory and management experience. Ability to develop and present detailed briefings and statistical analysis. Basic knowledge of desktop computer hardware and software, to include operating systems, upgrades, troubleshooting, and repair. Knowledge of the Air Force personnel system required. Must be able to obtain a National Agency Check security clearance. Must be able to speak, write, and communicate effectively using the English language. All resumes or applications should be sent to Robert@dellew.com	Kadena, Okla. - Natio black and white JCR registered male boxer, 3 years old. To see picture and find out more about him go check him out at www.01p1els.com or email emiliosw@01p1els.com but cooler speaker in subject	Kadena, Okla. - Rescued white, "greyhound" look-a-like 6 months old & Male mixed breed. We have one cat but just to much - and would like to just have one. His name is taggie and would like to go to a good home. Please call 844-200-0000 or www.01p1els.com for pictures	Okla. - We Have a FREE air Male, black and tan, black, good with family and kids. We have one cat but just to much - and would like to just have one. His name is taggie and would like to go to a good home. Please call 844-200-0000 or www.01p1els.com for pictures	Kadena, Okla. - Natio black and white JCR registered male boxer, 3 years old. To see picture and find out more about him go check him out at www.01p1els.com or email emiliosw@01p1els.com but cooler speaker in subject	Kadena, Okla. - Rescued white, "greyhound" look-a-like 6 months old & Male mixed breed. We have one cat but just to much - and would like to just have one. His name is taggie and would like to go to a good home. Please call 844-200-0000 or www.01p1els.com for pictures	Okla. - We Have a FREE air Male, black and tan, black, good with family and kids. We have one cat but just to much - and would like to just have one. His name is taggie and would like to go to a good home. Please call 844-200-0000 or www.01p1els.com for pictures	Kadena, Okla. - Natio black and white JCR registered male boxer, 3 years old. To see picture and find out more about him go check him out at www.01p1els.com or email emiliosw@01p1els.com but cooler speaker in subject	Kadena, Okla. - Rescued white, "greyhound" look-a-like 6 months old & Male mixed breed. We have one cat but just to much - and would like to just have one. His name is taggie and would like to go to a good home. Please call 844-200-0000 or www.01p1els.com for pictures	Okla. - We Have a FREE air Male, black and tan, black, good with family and kids. We have one cat but just to much - and would like to just have one. His name is taggie and would like to go to a good home. Please call 844-200-0000 or www.01p1els.com for pictures	Kadena, Okla. - Natio black and white JCR registered male boxer, 3 years old. To see picture and find out more about him go check him out at www.01p1els.com or email emiliosw@01p1els.com but cooler speaker in subject	Kadena, Okla. - Rescued white, "greyhound" look-a-like 6 months old & Male mixed breed. We have one cat but just to much - and would like to just have one. His name is taggie and would like to go to a good home. Please call 844-200-0000 or www.01p1els.com for pictures	Okla. - We Have a FREE air Male, black and tan, black, good with family and kids. We have one cat but just to much - and would like to just have one. His name is taggie and would like to go to a good home. Please call 844-200-0000 or www.01p1els.com for pictures	Kadena, Okla. - Natio black and white JCR registered male boxer, 3 years old. To see picture and find out more about him go check him out at www.01p1els.com or email emiliosw@01p1els.com but cooler speaker in subject

NFL scoreboard

American Conference

East	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y.-England	12	0	0	.867	413	243
Indianapolis	8	7	0	.533	284	299
Buffalo	9	6	0	.600	317	253
Miami	4	11	0	.267	252	324
South						
Indianapolis	12	0	0	.800	508	318
Jacksonville	8	7	0	.533	248	247
Houston	7	8	0	.467	295	317
Pittsburgh	4	11	0	.267	320	420
North						
Pittsburgh	10	0	0	.933	343	227
Indianapolis	8	7	0	.533	287	245
Cincinnati	7	8	0	.467	326	352
San Diego	3	12	0	.200	254	376
West						
San Diego	4	0	0	.733	422	296
Denver	9	0	0	.600	348	290
City	9	0	0	.600	348	290
Oakland	5	6	0	.450	313	349

National Conference

East	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y.-Philadelphia	10	0	0	.800	399	302
Tex.	9	0	0	.600	297	377
Philadelphia	5	6	0	.450	333	375
Washington	5	6	0	.450	313	219
West						
San Francisco	11	0	0	.733	314	247
Carolina	7	8	0	.467	317	318
New Orleans	7	7	0	.500	327	387
Tampa Bay	5	10	0	.333	294	392
North						
Green Bay	9	0	0	.600	393	336
Indianapolis	8	7	0	.533	387	374
Detroit	6	9	0	.400	277	376
Chicago	10	0	0	.333	217	300
West						
Seattle	8	7	0	.533	343	347
San Francisco	8	7	0	.533	367	356
Arizona	5	10	0	.333	252	415
N.Y.-New York	3	13	0	.200	312	373

x-closed division
y-closed division
z-closed playoff spot

Fridays games

Green Bay 34, Minnesota 31

Saturday's games

Kansas City 31, Oakland 30

Denver 37, Tennessee 16

Sunday's games

Detroit 19, Chicago 13

Indianapolis 34, San Diego 31, OT

Pittsburgh 20, Baltimore 10

Atlanta 21, Jacksonville 0

New Orleans 26, Cincinnati 23

Cincinnati 21, N.Y. Giants 22

Miami 41, San Francisco 7

New England 23, N.Y. Jets 17

Dallas 34, Arizona 21

Miami 13, Washington 10

Philadelphia 37, Tampa Bay 20

Dallas 10, Cleveland 7

Mondays game

Carolina at St. Louis

Tuesday, Jan. 2

Detroit at Tennessee

Miami at Baltimore

Green Bay at St. Louis

Cleveland at Houston

Carolina at Washington

Pittsburgh at Buffalo

San Francisco at Cincinnati

San Francisco at New England

Cincinnati at Philadelphia

Atlanta at Seattle

Tampa Bay at Arizona

Kansas City at San Diego

Indianapolis at Denver

Philadelphia at Oakland

Dallas at N.Y. Giants

End Regular Season

Sunday

Lions 19, Bears 13

Chicago 17, 7-13

Detroit 11, 0-7-13

First Quarter

Det.—Jones 1 run (Harrison kick), 11:30.

Det.—FD Hanson 39, 5:50.

Third Quarter

Chi.—Briggs 38 interception return (pass failed), 1:40.

Fourth Quarter

Chi.—McKee 15 pass from Hutchinson (McKee kick), 7:04.

Final Score

First downs 16-17

Total Net Yards 129-114

Rushes-yards 25-124

Passing 105-156

Punt Returns 1-0

Kickoff Returns 3-51

Interceptions 2-18

Fumbles-Lost 20-35

Comp-Att-Int 10-20-5

Sacked-Yards Lost 3-24

Punts 8-43

Fumbles-Lost 1-1

Penalties-Yards 8-67

Time of Possession 26:38

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Chicago, 22-109, average 4.9.

Receiving—Chicago, 10-123, average 12.3.

Passing—Chicago, 22-356, 4-11, 2-17, 1-1.

Interceptions—Chicago, 2-10, average 5.0.

Fumbles—Chicago, 2-10, 1-1.

Sacked—Chicago, 3-24, 1-1.

Punts—Chicago, 8-43, 5-17.

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Punts</

Beltran, Steinbrenner chat; Milton to Reds

The Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Carlos Beltran was impressed by George Steinbrenner after meeting with the New York Yankees owner earlier in the week, and told a newspaper in Puerto Rico that he would not be intimidated by playing in New York.

The free-agent All-Star center fielder who led the Houston Astros within one victory of their first World Series berth, talked with Steinbrenner in Tampa, Fla., on Tuesday.

"The meeting with Steinbrenner was very good," Beltran said in a story published in Friday's edition of *Primer Hora* newspaper.

"He is a professional person, super-educated. I've let them know my interest, and they have interest, too, about me joining their team."

The Yankees — and Astros — clearly will have some competition in the race for Beltran, who said the New York Mets, Detroit Tigers and Chicago Cubs have also shown interest.

"The Mets have been very aggressive," he said. "So far, they haven't made any offers. I think we'll have a meeting very soon to talk personally."

No meeting with the Mets is



Sidney Ponson

scheduled, but one will probably take place the week of Jan. 3.

Beltran thinks he would be prepared to play in a high-profile baseball environment, such as New York.

"In all the places, when you do something good, the people applaud you. When you do something bad, they boo you," he said. "That happens in all the big league parks."

The All-Star outfielder batted .417 in the NL championship series for the Astros with four home

runs, five RBIs and four stolen bases after hitting .455 with four homers and nine RBIs in the division series. If Houston doesn't reach an agreement by Jan. 8, the Astros would be ineligible to re-sign him until May 1.

Reds sign Eric Milton

CINCINNATI — Free agent Eric Milton and Cincinnati agreed to a \$25.5 million, three-year deal Monday as the Reds kept revamping their pitching staff.

Milton, 29, led Philadelphia in victories, starts and strikeouts last season, going 14-6 with a 4.75 ERA in 34 starts with 171 strikeouts.

His contract calls for a \$4 million signing bonus, \$4 million in 2005, \$8.5 million in 2006 and \$9 million in 2007, matching the total value of Matt Clement's deal with Boston.

The signing gives the Reds a proven left-hander in a rotation that desperately needed one.

Orioles' Ponson detained

ORANJESTAD, Aruba — Baltimore pitcher Sidney Ponson has been detained on suspicion of assaulting a judge at a beach on Christmas, police said Sunday.

Ponson, who was born in Aruba, was expected to be released Monday on assault and battery charges, police spokesman Edwin Comencencia said.

Ponson's lawyer, Chris Lejeune, wasn't available for comment.

On Saturday at a beach in Boca Catalina, several people confronted Ponson, accusing him of harassing them with his personal watercraft and operating it recklessly, police said.

The 28-year-old right-hander allegedly struck one of the men in the group several times, police said. The man was later identified as a judge, Comencencia said.

The judge was hospitalized but his condition was not known, authorities said. Ponson left the scene but police detained him late Saturday, police said. He was being held at a jail in the community of San Nicolas.

Ponson, 11-15 with a 5.30 ERA in 33 starts last season, was decorated in his homeland in 2003 as a Knight in the Order of the Dutch Royal House.

Giants sign Moises Alou

SAN FRANCISCO — The San Francisco Giants finalized a two-year contract with outfielder Moises Alou on Monday that reunites him with his father, manager Felipe Alou.

The deal is worth about \$13.25 million and includes a player option for the 2006 season. An agreement was reached last week, but was pending until Alou passed a physical.

The deal also gives the Giants another big bat to team with Barry Bonds in the middle of the lineup. Alou hit a career-high 39 homers for the Chicago Cubs last season and drove in 106 runs.

He becomes the fourth Alou to play for the Giants, joining Felipe (1958-63) and uncles Jesus (1963-68) and Matty (1960-65). Felipe and Moises are one of six father-son combinations in major league history that have been manager-player.

Three face luxury tax

NEW YORK — The Boston Red Sox got an extra bill after winning the World Series. Boston and Anaheim must pay baseball's luxury tax along with the New York Yankees, according to final figures compiled by the commissioner's office.

The Yankees are required to pay \$25,026,352, according to a Dec. 21 memorandum that was sent to all major league teams. Boston owes \$3,155,234 for exceeding the payroll threshold of \$110.5 million and Anaheim got a bill for \$927,059.

Checks for the competitive-balance tax, as it is formally known, are due at the commissioner's office by Jan. 31.

Ex-Blue Jay Ault dies at 54

TORONTO — Doug Ault, who hit two home runs in the first game in Toronto Blue Jays history in 1977, has died at 54.

He died at his home in Tarpon Springs, Fla., a few miles from the Blue Jays' spring training quarters in Dunedin, the team said Monday. The club provided no further details about his death.



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Texas plans to boost Brown's salary

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — With Texas preparing for its first Rose Bowl appearance, the university is working up a new contract with a raise for coach Mack Brown.

"We like what we've got," Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds told the Associated Press on Monday. "He's done a wonderful job with the program."

Dodds said details would be announced later in the week but Brown would get a raise on a salary that currently pays him slightly more than \$2 million per year.

Armstrong athlete of the year

AUSTIN, Texas — Already recognized as one of the truly inspiring athletes of his generation for his comeback against cancer,

Sports briefs

Lane Armstrong took his cycling legacy a step further when he won a record-breaking sixth consecutive Tour de France in July.

For his accomplishment, he was selected Monday as The Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year for the third straight year. He and Michael Jordan (1991-93) are the only athletes selected three straight times since the honor is first awarded in 1931.

Miller, Rahives 2-3

BORMIO, Italy — Overall World Cup leader Bode Miller and U.S. teammate Daron Rahives finished second and third

Monday during downhill training on a course that will host next month's world championships.

Olympic gold medalist Fritz Strobl of Austria was fastest in the first training session for Wednesday's World Cup race, covering the 1.8-mile Stelvio layout in 1 minute, 53.22 seconds. Miller was 1.19 seconds behind and Rahives was 1.23 back.

Ex-Pats TE Coates hired

SALISBURY, N.C. — Ben Coates, a Pro Bowl tight end with the New England Patriots, has been hired as football coach at his alma mater, tiny Livingstone College in North Carolina.

Coates played in two Super Bowls, losing with the Patriots in 1996 and winning with Baltimore in 2001.

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BY CLIFF CHRISTI

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

There is no higher honor in professional football than induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. But there has been a small pantheon of players in the 85-year history of the NFL that has transcended even that special company.

Reggie White was among them. He was one of the great of the great.

White, who died Sunday at age 43, played 15 years in the NFL, including six with the Green Bay Packers, and finished his career with 198 sacks, now second on the career list. He was elected to a record 13 straight Pro Bowls. He was twice the NFL's defensive player of the year.

He was selected to the NFL's all-decade teams for the 1980s and 1990s. And he was one of three defensive ends named to the league's 75th anniversary team in 1994, six years before he retired.

White is all but a cliché to be inducted into the Hall of Fame when he becomes eligible a year from now, if not before if the selection committee decides to waive its five-year waiting period.

The other defensive ends honored with White on the 75th anniversary team were David "Deacon" Jones and Gino Marchetti.

Willie Davis, one of 12 defensive ends in the Hall of Fame, played during the same period as Jones and Marchetti. As one of the great Packers of the Vince Lombardi era and a current member of the franchise's board of directors, Davis also closely followed White's career.

Davis categorized Jones and Marchetti as great pass rushers. To this day, Davis said Marchetti was the best he had ever seen at that aspect of the game. But Davis said he probably would rank White as the most complete defensive end of them all.

"Reggie could very well have been that one player," said Davis.

"His ability to play end with almost tackle-like skills, and ultimately getting outside and playing as a typical defensive end would play it today; when you take those two things and hook them together, Reggie could very well be the guy."

Jones and Marchetti played before sacks were kept as an unofficial statistic. When White retired following the 2000 season, he held the record. Bruce Smith broke it last year, finishing his career with 200.

Smith played four more years than White. Jones, who played 14 seasons mostly with the Los Angeles Rams, said he'd rank himself No. 1, but that White might be next on his list.

"There are two ends on every team," said Jones. "We were the No. 1 and No. 2 choices on the all-time team. But I would never say anybody who ever played the position was better than me. You could hold me to a fire and I'd never say that."

After two seasons with the Memphis Showboats of the United States Football League, White signed with the Philadelphia Eagles on Sept. 20, 1985. He played in only 13 games that season but had an instant impact. He registered 13 sacks and was named the NFC's defensive rookie of the year.

In eight seasons with the Eagles, White totaled 124 sacks, an average of 15½. In the strike-shortened 1987 season, he recorded a league-high 21 in 12 games.

White played with the Packers from 1993-98. He added

76½ sacks to his total and was the cornerstone of a defense that ranked No. 1 in the league when the Packers won Super Bowl XXXI.

White finished his career with the Carolina Panthers in 2000.

Jim Hanifan, defensive line coach of the St. Louis Rams, is in his 31st season in the NFL. Included was a stint as line coach of the Washington Redskins' famed "Hogs," when White was playing for division rival Philadelphia.

No defensive end ever caused him more fits than White, Hanifan said.

"He was absolutely awesome," he said, "not only when he played defensive end, but when he was with Buddy (Ryan) and the Eagles, they'd line up with him over center. My gosh! We did everything we could think of to minimize the havoc he would cause. But he created that anyway. He could not only come off the edge with speed. But, oh my goodness, he came off with power."

In comparing White to other defensive ends over the past three decades, Hanifan made the same distinction as Davis when he compared White to the players of yester-

year. What separated White from the others was his ability to play the run and the pass.

"He was a very similar threat as Lawrence Taylor was at linebacker," Hanifan said. "The other guy I would put up in that top three would be Bruce Smith. But Bruce was going to go after that quarterback and you could run the ball there, at times. Reggie was solid, all the way around."

A case could even be made that White was more than just a great defensive end. Along with Taylor, he might also be on a short list of the greatest defensive players of the modern era.

"I'm going to use that Bum Phillips' line: I don't know if he's the best, but it wouldn't take time to call the roll," said Ron Wolf, who as general manager of the Packers brought White to Green Bay. "You're talking about defensive greats who ever played the game. He's right up there."

"Deion Sanders revolutionized the game. Ted Hendricks. They were great players. But [White] would be in that group."

Against the run, White not only possessed the strength and leverage to hold the point of attack, but he also had the instincts and quickness to squeeze gaps, and the speed to chase plays down from the backside.

His signature as a pass rusher was a combination of what they call in the business club, rip or hump moves. Essentially, White would charge up-field, catch the tackle shifting his weight, and sweep him aside if not completely knock him off his feet.

"He was tremendous. He had great strength. He had great speed," said Dale Haupt, a native of Manitowoc who served as White's defensive line coach for seven of his eight seasons in Philadelphia. "He'd set them up with [the club], fake with it, almost like a boxer. But he also could play off that. Fake the club and go back to the rip."

Bob Oates, a writer for the Los Angeles Times and the only charter member remaining on the Hall of Fame selection committee, said that the five-year rule had never been waived in the 41-year history of the voting.

Oates said that he expected someone on the committee to propose in the weeks ahead that an exception be made for White.

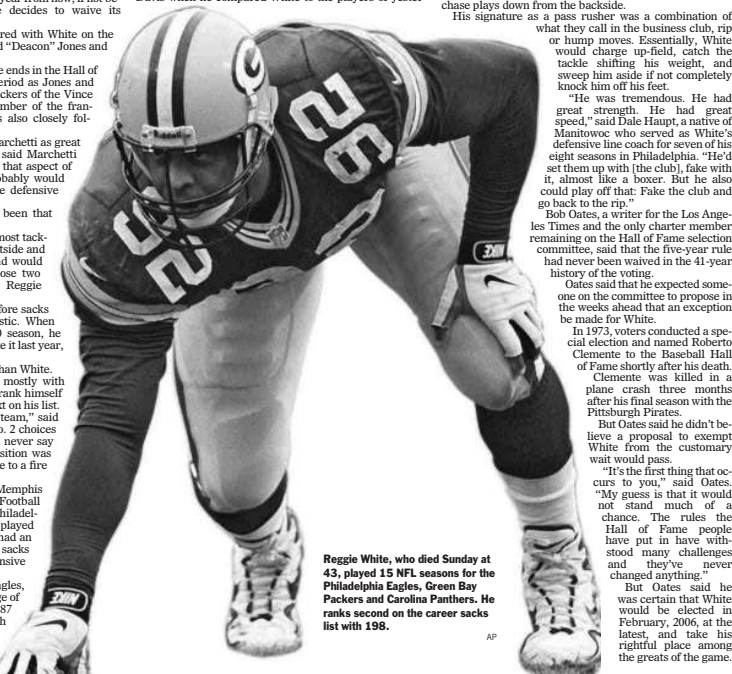
In 1973, voters considered a special election and named Roberto Clemente to the Baseball Hall of Fame shortly after his death.

Clemente was killed in a plane crash three months after his final season with the Pittsburgh Pirates.

But Oates said he didn't believe a proposal to exempt White from the customary wait would pass.

"It's the first thing that occurs to you," said Oates. "My guess is that it would not stand much of a chance. The rules the Hall of Fame people have put in have withstood many challenges and they've never changed anything."

But Oates said he was certain that White would be elected in February, 2006, at the latest. That take his rightful place among the greats of the game.



Reggie White, who died Sunday at 43, played 15 NFL seasons for the Philadelphia Eagles, Green Bay Packers and Carolina Panthers. He ranks second on the career sacks list with 198.

Football's reaction to Reggie White's death:

"Reggie White was a gentle warrior who will be remembered as one of the greatest defensive players in NFL history. Equally as impressive as his achievements on the field was the positive impact he made off the field and the way he served as a positive influence on so many young people." — NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue.

"He was just a wonderful player, first of all. Then, as a person, he was just the best. He was one of the leaders, along with Brett Favre, of our football team in Green Bay. I'm a better person for having been around Reggie White." — Seattle Seahawks coach Mike Holmgren, who coached White at Green Bay.

"He was one of the greatest players who ever put on a uniform at his position. I referred to him as the Tony Dorsett of defensive linemen. There's never been a better one." — Johnny Majors, White's coach at Tennessee.

"Everyone thought the last place he would sign was Green Bay and it was monumental because not only did he sign but he recruited for Green Bay ... He sent a message to the rest of the NFL that Green Bay was a great place to play." — Green Bay President Bob Harlan. White was the first major black player to sign with the Packers as a free agent.

"At times, you would get a little frustrated with Reggie because he was always goofing around on the practice field. He goofed around all the time. He loved the game and rarely got serious. Now on Sundays, he'd get serious and he would have fun." — Tennessee Titans coach Jeff Fisher, who was with White for five seasons in Philadelphia.

Preliminary report: White likely died from lung ailment

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NFL great Reggie White may have died because of a respiratory disease combined with other health problems, a preliminary autopsy report said Monday.

White most likely had a condition that affected the amount of air his lungs could hold, resulting in "fatal cardiac arrhythmia," said Dr. Mike Sullivan, the medical examiner for Mecklenburg County and a forensic pathologist.

The report issued by Sullivan's office also said sleep apnea may have been a factor.

The report is a preliminary

one; determining a final cause of death could take up to three months, Sullivan's office said.

White died Sunday at Presbyterian Hospital in Huntersville after being taken there from his home in nearby Cornelius. His wife, Sara, called 911.

White had the disease, known as sarcoidosis, for several years, family spokesman Keith Johnson said Sunday. He described it as a respiratory ailment that affected his sleep.

On its Web site, the American Lung Association describes sarcoidosis as a disease characterized by the presence of small areas of inflamed cells that can attack any organ of the body but is

most frequently found in the lung.

The cause of the disease, which is most common among blacks and white northern Europeans, is not known.

Sleep apnea causes people to stop breathing repeatedly — in some cases, hundreds of times — during their sleep.

The disease killed a man who had earned the respect of other NFL players both on and off the field.

"He may have been best player I've ever seen and certainly was the best I've ever played with or against," Green Bay quarterback Brett Favre said after White's death Sunday.

"Off the field, he did so much for so many people. He really reached a lot of people. ... He was a great friend on and off the field. We'll all miss him."

The fearsome former defensive end with Philadelphia, Green Bay and Carolina was 43.

"It just seems so odd, so surreal," said former Packers teammate Eugene Robinson, now a commentator for Carolina. "I still think I don't believe it." When I saw it flash on the television — 1961 to 2004 — I was just like, 'I'm not going to try to fight back any more tears. I'm just going to cry.'"

Sara White said in a statement Sunday: "Today our beloved hus-

band, father and friend passed away. His family appreciates your thoughts and prayers as we mourn the loss of Reggie White. We want to thank you in advance for honoring our privacy."

A police officer who lived outside White's Tudor-style home in a gated community and would not let a reporter approach the house. A two-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year and ordained minister who was known as the "Minister of Defense." White played 15 seasons with Philadelphia and the second team in Carolina after being released by the 1988 season as the NFL's career sacks leader with 198.

The mark has since been passed by Bruce Smith.

Fresno St. upsets Virginia in overtime of MFC Bowl

By TIM KORTE

The Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Paul Pinear threw five touchdown passes, including the game-winning 25-yard throw to Stephen Spang in overtime, as Fresno State came back to beat No. 18 Virginia 37-24 in the MFC Computers Bowl on Monday.

Pinear was fabulous, completing 23 of 36 passes for 235 yards with an interception. He helped the Bulldogs go 9-3 erase a 21-7 second-quarter deficit and notch another win against a big-name team. His five touchdown passes were a record for the game, formerly known as the Humanitarian Bowl.

Virginia got the first possession of overtime, taking a 34-31 lead on a 26-yard field goal by Connor Hughes.

It didn't take Pinear long to end it. He zipped a pass inside the 5 to Spang, who fought off a pair of would-be tacklers and dropped into the end zone. The

Bulldogs stormed off the sideline in celebration while the Cavaliers were left dejected.

Virginia (8-4) seemed to have things in hand after Walt Lundy followed his big blockers and rumbled across the blue turf at Boise State's home field on a 20-yard TD run that put the Cavaliers up 21-24 with 6:20 left.

But Pinear wasn't finished. He started on the 17, turning to the ground game to move Fresno into position to tie. The Bulldogs worked the ball across midfield, then Wendell Mathis ran 22 yards to Virginia's 15 on a 6-yard burst for a first down that briefly stopped the clock with 1:26 to go.

On third-and-6 at the 10, Pinear threaded a 7-yard pass to tight end Duncan Reid, then spiked the ball to stop the clock at 1:00.

On fourth down, Pinear connected with Jaron Fairman with 11 seconds on the clock.

Brent Vinstainer added the PAT kick, and it was tied at 31.

Manning: Colts QB keeps focused on team goals

MANNING, FROM BACK PAGE

He put the team's goal to win a championship at the top of his priority list when he reported for training camp and he's managed to keep it there, no matter how much the hype focused on his individual performances. Manning shares the credit every bit as deliberately as he shares the ball, having learned that the fastest way to improve on a 24 record in the playoffs is to have his teammates as prepared and motivated as he is.

And so it should have come as no surprise that Dominic Rhodes, the part-time running back who returned a kick 88 yards in the final quarter to make the comeback against the Chargers possible, said afterward, "As much as it's his, I feel like it's my record, too."

"When I get old, in my 50s or whatever, I'll say I was on that team when he threw that touchdown. It was a part of everything he's done, and we've done," Rhodes said. "It's a special feeling."

Even Manning couldn't deny that much.

"It's an individual thing, but it meant a lot to a lot of people. And that," he said, "means something to me."

But it will mean much more if the Colts are still playing when February rolls around.

"We are happy about the regular-season records," Indianapolis coach Tony Dungy said, staying on message. "But we are looking for the big prize once the playoffs start."

Jim Iike is a national sports columnist for The Associated Press. Write to him at jlike@ap.org

The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The Carolina Panthers are one step closer to overcoming their horrendous start.

Jake Delhomme threw for 214 yards and four touchdowns Sunday, helping the defending NFC champions beat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 37-20 and move with in a victory of clinching a playoff berth.

The Panthers (7-8) won for the sixth time in seven games after opening 1-7, and they can earn a wild-card spot by beating New Orleans at home next Sunday.

The Saints, also 7-8, stayed in the race by beating Atlanta 26-13, a victory that eliminated Tampa Bay from contention earlier in the week.

The Bucs (5-10) lost for the third straight time since routing the NFC South champion Falcons 27-0 in a game they hoped would be a springboard for a strong stretch run that would carry them to the playoffs after opening 0-4.

Instead, Tampa Bay is assured its worst finish since 1996. A loss at Arizona in the season finale would give the Bucs 11 defeats for the first time since 1993.

Seahawks 24, Cardinals 21: At Seattle, Shaun Alexander rushed 30 times for 154 yards with three touchdowns and Darrell Jackson caught six passes for 101 yards as Seattle clinched a playoff berth.

The Seahawks (8-7) will clinch

NFL roundup

the NFC West if Philadelphia beats St. Louis on Monday night. It's the first time Seattle has made the playoffs in consecutive years since 1983-84.

Josh McDown threw a pair of 29-yard touchdown strikes to Larry Fitzgerald in the fourth quarter, pulling the Cardinals (5-10) to 24-21 with 2:30 to play. He also found Fitzgerald for a score with 11:32 remaining.

Patriots 23, Jets 7: At East Rutherford, N.J., Tom Brady and New England dominated division rival New York to clinch a first-round bye in the playoffs. The Jets (0-5) must win their finale at St. Louis next week to be assured of making the AFC playoffs as a wild card.

The Patriots (13-2), coming off an embarrassing 29-26 loss to the Miami Dolphins on Monday night, looked completely different.

Brady threw two touchdown passes and went 21-for-32 for 264 yards after tying a career high with four interceptions against Miami.

Saints 26, Falcons 13: At New Orleans, Aaron Brooks scored on a fourth-down 1-yard run and Michael Lewis had a 96-yard kickoff return to keep the Saints (7-8) in playoff contention.

Atlanta (11-4) rested Michael Vick, who has a sore shoulder,

after clinching a first-round bye in the playoffs last week.

Bills 41, 49ers 7: At San Francisco, Willis McGahee rushed for 102 yards and two touchdowns on an injured knee. Lee Evans caught two scoring passes and the Bills easily earned their sixth straight victory.

Drew Bledsoe went 21-for-32 for 172 yards and a touchdown for the Bills (9-6), whose longest winning streak since 1990 has them alive in their quest to become just the second team in NFL history to make the playoffs after opening 0-4. Buffalo also clinched its first winning record since 1999.

Cowboys 13, Redskins 10: At Irving, Texas, Vinny Testaverde silenced the boos from fans who wanted him benched with a 39-yard touchdown to Patrick Crayton with 30 seconds left that gave the Dallas its fourth straight victory over Washington and 14th in 15 games.

Dolphins 10, Browns 7: At Miami, Olinde Mare kicked a 51-yard field goal with 7 seconds left, and the Dolphins edged Cleveland, prompting a big cheer from the 20,000 fans who remained until the finish.

Jim Bates won in the matchup of interim coaches against Terry Robison. Bates improved to 3-3 since Dave Wannstedt resigned, but he'll be replaced after the season by LSU coach Nick Saban, who accepted the Miami job Saturday.

was Gallows's 10th TD in the past four games.

• Brandon Stokley, Colts, caught Peyton Manning's record-breaking 99th TD pass for 10 yards and a 10. Stokley's 10th gave him the first receiving touchdown in his career. Marvin Harrison, Reggie Wayne with 10 and 1,000 yards apiece in the same game.

• Antonio Gates, Chargers, caught his 24th career touchdown pass, a 10-yard TD for a tight end, in the Chargers' 34-13 loss to the Indianapolis Colts.

Defense

• The Houston Oilers gave their first shutout in franchise history in a 21-0 victory over the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Special Teams

• Kelviaun Pruitt, Bears, returned a punt 42 yards to set up Jon Kim's 4-yard touchdown. Pruitt's return set up a 44-yard score as the Bengals rallied for a 23-22 victory over the New York Giants.

Sunday's NFL stars:

• Peyton Manning, Colts, threw his 48th TD pass of the season to beat Dan Fouts in a 38-20 record Manning finished 27-for-44 for 383 yards and 2 TDs in the Colts' overtime victory over the San Diego Chargers.

• Tom Brady, Patriots, rushed for a career-high 156 yards and a touchdown as Houston crippled the Jacksonville Jaguars' playoff hopes with a 21-0 victory.



AP photo

Quarterbacks

• Peyton Manning, Colts, threw his 48th TD pass of the season to beat Dan Fouts in a 38-20 record Manning finished 27-for-44 for 383 yards and 2 TDs in the Colts' overtime victory over the San Diego Chargers.

Running backs

• Shaun Alexander, Seahawks, rushed 30 times for 154 yards as Seattle clinched a playoff berth with a 24-21 victory over the Arizona Cardinals.

• Donovan Davis, Texans, rushed for a career-high 156 yards and a touchdown as Houston crippled the Jacksonville Jaguars' playoff hopes with a 21-0 victory.

Receivers

• Joey Gallows, Buccaneers, had nine receptions for 88 yards and a touchdown in a 37-20 loss to the Carolina Panthers. It

SPORTS



Phoenix guard Nash sets record with at least 10 assists in 11th straight victory, Page 27

Looking to top Marino again

Manning has season TD-pass mark but would prefer Super Bowl trophy

The big question won't be answered until the playoffs begin and even the NFL's biggest control freak is helpless to do anything about that at the moment.

But the record came exactly the way Peyton Manning wanted it — in the flow of a game, with the clock ticking down, and something left to play for. And by now, you're probably familiar, too, with a few of the details in what sounded like a harmonic convergence Sunday under the big top in Indianapolis.

How Colts owner Jim Irsay dispatched his private jet to pick up Manning's snowbound parents in Memphis and whisk them back to Indy in time to see the final 9 minutes of the game and overtime. And how Archie and Olivia Manning's middle son sidled over to wide receiver Brandon Stokley with a minute left in regulation, called a play the Colts had never used in a game, then called a dummy audible at the line to confuse the Chargers and almost everyone else in the building, and then threw the ball toward the end zone even before Stokley made his final cut at the 5.

"The ball was on me so quick, I'm just glad I was able to get my hands up," Stokley said. "I didn't have time to think about it."

"It would have been embarrassing, to turn around and get hit with it in the face."

The best thing from Manning's standpoint, however, wasn't the perfect timing, even though he conceded, "I was afraid I might have thrown it too early."

No, the best part was that touchdown pass No. 49 of the season, the one that put Dan Marino in Manning's rearview mirror, came with the Colts still needing a 2-point conversion to force the overtime period, putting off the celebrations until later. Those didn't commence until Manning had engineered a 61-yard drive in over-

Jim Little



time to set up Mike Vanderjag's field goal that secured Indianapolis' eighth straight victory and the No. 3 seed in the AFC for the playoffs.

"I think Johnny Unitas would have been proud of that drive," Manning said afterward, which is as much celebrating as he allowed himself.

Just seven seasons into a career, Manning's link to some of the greatest quarterbacks ever is already secure. By just about any measure, he's off to the best start of any passer in history. What remains to be seen, though, is whether Manning winds up linked with prolific quarterbacks like Marino or Hall of Famers Fran Tarkenton and Jim Kelly or consistent Super Bowl winners like Joe Montana.

Championships are an unyielding measure in a team game like football, where even the quarterback can only do so much. Marino couldn't will himself a running game — ever — and John Elway and to wait until he was 37 for all the other pieces to fall into place.

Manning has been a staple on rotisserie league teams since he strolled into the league — he's having arguably the best season ever while pulling the strings for one of the most productive offenses ever. But as a student of the game, Manning knows that for all the glossy numbers Marino put up, his predecessor is still most remembered for never passing his team to a Super Bowl win. Maybe that's why, for all his impressive work in the pocket, Manning does just as much maneuvering in interviews.

SEE MANNING ON PAGE 31



Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning led his team to a 34-31 overtime victory over the San Diego Chargers and broke a record that many thought could not be broken. He's still on pace to shatter Steve Young's NFL record for season passer rating (112.8) next week in Denver.

White's legacy as one of NFL's greatest DEs, pass rushers sure to earn him posthumous trip to NFL Hall

Page 30



Panthers only one victory from clinching playoff berth despite losing seven of first eight games

Page 31

Fresno St. tops Virginia in MPC Computers Bowl

Page 31

